

Bridge to Terabithia

Written by Katherine Paterson

STORY SUMMARY

Jesse Aarons, Jr, lives with his four sisters and his parents on a farm in rural Virginia, USA. His community, Lake Creek, is an impoverished one not far from Washington, D.C. His parents can hardly make ends meet. Jesse detests the poverty. Being the middle child and the only boy, Jesse feels rejected by his family. He does not even dare to share with them his love of drawing. He feels overworked and misunderstood by just about everyone except his six-year-old sister May Belle, his ally and admirer.

Jesse finally finds acceptance and happiness when he becomes friends with Leslie, a newcomer to the area. Although quite different in background and experiences, Jesse and Leslie relate well to one another. Together, they face the bullies at school, parents, peer pressure and rejection. They create a secret world and help each other deal with pre-adolescence and the inequities of the world from their point of view.

Jesse's existence is suddenly shattered when Leslie is accidentally killed. Faced with this tragedy, Jesse must go on without Leslie's support or advice.



Vocabulary

Chapters One, Two and Three: Jesse Oliver Aarons, Jr, Leslie Burke and The Fastest Kid in the Fifth Grade

Match the vocabulary words on the left to the definitions on the right. Place the correct letter on each line.

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| ___ 1. allotted | A. obvious, easily noticed |
| ___ 2. anticipate | B. to suffer without yielding, to tolerate |
| ___ 3. conceit | C. pretending to be what one is not, insincere |
| ___ 4. conscious | D. mix confusedly |
| ___ 5. conspicuous | E. inflated opinion of oneself |
| ___ 6. eliminate | F. wild uproar or noise |
| ___ 7. endure | G. reschedule to a later time |
| ___ 8. flutter | H. shook, trembled |
| ___ 9. hypocritical | I. assigned a share or portion |
| ___ 10. muddle | J. causing rejection, disgusting |
| ___ 11. notion | K. to move quickly and nervously |
| ___ 12. pandemonium | L. stirred up, wakened, excited |
| ___ 13. postpone | M. having knowledge of, aware |
| ___ 14. proverbial | N. burn with steam or hot water |
| ___ 15. quivered | O. affair, situation |
| ___ 16. repulsive | P. something that appeals or entices |
| ___ 17. roused | Q. look forward to, expect |
| ___ 18. sarcasm | R. smile in a smug way |
| ___ 19. scald | S. opinion, idea, belief |
| ___ 20. shebang | T. cast out, remove |
| ___ 21. smirk | U. commonly used, widely referred to |
| ___ 22. temptation | V. mocking remark |

Choose three of the above vocabulary words. Write an original sentence for each.

Comprehension and Discussion Questions

Chapter Four: Rulers of Terabithia

Answer the following questions in complete sentence form. Give examples from the story to support your response.

1. Although he wouldn't be the number one runner in the fourth and fifth grades, Jesse is able to console himself. Explain?

2. Explain what is meant by the following excerpt: "He felt there in the teachers' room that it was the beginning of a new season in his life, and he chose deliberately to make it so."

3. What reason does Leslie give for moving to Jesse's part of the state? How would you feel if you were Leslie?

4. Why does Jesse choose to write about football rather than drawing? How would you have handled the assignment if you were Jesse?

Spotlight Literary Skill

Figurative Language

The use of language helps to enrich all types of writing. Katherine Paterson uses various types of figurative language to create mental pictures that make the dialogue and descriptions more vivid.

SIMILE: A simile is a stated comparison between two dissimilar things. The word “like” or “as” is used to make the comparison.

“Mama would be mad as flies in a fruit jar.”

“He was drifting, drifting like a fat white lazy cloud, back and forth across the blue.”

METAPHOR: A metaphor is a stated comparison between two dissimilar things without the use of “like” or “as”.

“But it was she who was the diamond, sparkling out of that muddy, grassless, dirty-brick setting.”

“He saw her as a beautiful wild creature in that dirty old cage of a schoolhouse.”

PERSONIFICATION: Personification is the bestowing of human characteristics upon lifeless objects or abstract ideas.

“Where the dogwood and redbud played hide and seek between the oaks and evergrass.”

“The sun flung itself in golden streams through the trees to splash warmly at their feet.”



Post-Reading Activities

1. A lament is a type of poem that expresses sorrow because something or someone is no longer a part of one's life. Pretend that you are Jesse and think about the loss of Leslie's friendship. Put your thoughts in the form of a lament poem.
2. Read another book that deals with death. *Sounder*, *Where the Red Fern Grows* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* are some suggestions. How does the main character react when confronted with the loss of a loved one? Compare and contrast this character's reaction with that of Jesse's reaction in *Bridge to Terabithia*.
3. Write a sequel to *Bridge to Terabithia*. How is Jesse coping with life now that Leslie is gone? How did their relationship change the way in which Jesse faces the world? Who now occupies the kingdom of Terabithia?
4. Divide the class into small cooperative-learning groups. Each group will choose a chapter or section of the book to dramatise.
5. Describe a close relationship that you have with a friend. Tell why this friendship is so special to you.
6. Create your own Terabithia. Do you have your own secret place where you can go to be alone or to share special moments with friends? Perhaps it is a treehouse in the backyard, or maybe it's a cosy area inside your home. Sketch your secret place. Then tell why you chose it and what you do when you are there. If you do not have a special place, imagine one that you would like to have.

