

# Bridge to Terabithia

## Study Guide

by Rebecca Gilleland

For the novel by Katherine Paterson



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### **Bridge to Terabithia Study Guide**

A Progeny Press Study Guide

by Rebecca Gilleland

with Andrew Clausen, Michael Gilleland

Cover design by Michael Gilleland

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## **Note to Instructor**

**How to Use Progeny Press Study Guides.** Progeny Press study guides are designed to help students better understand and enjoy literature by getting them to notice and understand how authors craft their stories and to show them how to think through the themes and ideas introduced in the stories. To properly work through a Progeny Press study guide, students should have easy access to a good dictionary, a thesaurus, a Bible (we use NIV translation, but that is up to your preference; just be aware of some differences in language), and sometimes a topical Bible or concordance. Supervised access to the Internet also can be helpful at times, as can a good set of encyclopedias.

Most middle grades and high school study guides take from eight to ten weeks to complete, generally working on one section per week. Over the years, we have found that it works best if the students completely read the novel the first week, while also working on a prereading activity chosen by the parent or teacher. Starting the second week, most parents and teachers have found it works best to work on one study guide page per day until the chapter sections are completed. Students should be allowed to complete questions by referring to the book; many questions require some cross-reference between elements of the stories.

Most study guides contain an Overview section that can be used as a final test, or it can be completed in the same way the chapter sections were completed. If you wish to perform a final test but your particular study guide does not have an Overview section, we suggest picking a couple of questions from each section of the study guide and using them as your final test.

Most study guides also have a final section of essays and postreading activities. These may be assigned at the parents' or teachers' discretion, but we suggest that students engage in several writing or other extra activities during the study of the novel to complement their reading and strengthen their writing skills.

As for high school credits, most Christian high schools with whom we have spoken have assigned a value of one-fourth credit to each study guide, and this also seems to be acceptable to colleges assessing homeschool transcripts.

### ***Internet References***

All websites listed in this study guide were checked for appropriateness at the time of publication. However, due to the changing nature of the Internet, we cannot guarantee that the URLs listed will remain appropriate or viable. Therefore, we urge parents and teachers to take care in and exercise careful oversight of their children's use of the Internet.

## Synopsis

It is Jess Aarons's ambition to become the fastest runner in the fifth grade, and to achieve this feat, Jess practices all summer. Leslie Burke, the new girl in school, beats Jess in the races, but in spite of this, she and Jess become close friends. Together they create an imaginary kingdom called Terabithia where Leslie is queen and Jess learns to be king.

Together Leslie and Jess explore the limits of their imaginary kingdom, a kingdom threatened by the giants in their lives: teachers, bullies, and Jess's many fears. But with Leslie's help Jess learns to think, to use his imagination, and to stand up to his fears.

Then one day, while Jess is away, Leslie dies in an accident. How Jess learns to handle her death and the pain he feels can help all of us deal with loss.

Terabithia was the special place where Jess was king, but Jess decides that perhaps Terabithia was also a place he had gone to be knighted and grow strong. Now, without Leslie, he must go out into the world for both of them. Jess decides he must give the world beauty and caring to match what Leslie had loaned him in vision and strength. To do this, he begins by building a bridge—the bridge to Terabithia.

## About the Author

Katherine Paterson was born in 1932, in Qing Jiang, Jiangsu, China. Her parents were missionaries to China for the Southern Presbyterian Church. Chinese was her first language, but she quickly became bilingual. When she was 5, her family was forced to leave China, and although they returned the following year, Paterson's fluency in Chinese never returned.

Between the ages of 5 and 18, Paterson's family moved more than 15 times, making for a lonely childhood for young Katherine. At the age of 9, she was enrolled in the Calvin H. Wiley School in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Suspected by classmates of being a Japanese spy, Paterson found refuge in the school library. She became an aide to the school librarian and spent many happy hours shelving books, arranging the card catalog, and reading to younger children.

In 1954, Paterson graduated from King College in Bristol, Tennessee. She spent one year teaching Elementary School in Lovettsville, Virginia before returning to college to get her masters degree in Christian Education. In 1957 she followed in her parents' footsteps and spent four years in Japan as a missionary. Returning to the United States, she accepted a fellowship at Union Theological Seminary in New York where she met her husband, a Presbyterian minister.

In 1964, without ever cultivating an interest in becoming a writer, Paterson accepted her first professional writing assignment—formulating curriculum. When that project was completed, she turned to writing fiction. Drawing on her experiences in Japan, Paterson wrote *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum*, her first novel, which was published in 1973. A number of novels set in Japan soon followed.

Paterson has won a number of awards for her books. She won her first Newbery Medal in 1978 for *Bridge to Terabithia*, a book which sprung from the pain her 8-year-old son David felt after the death of his best friend. She won the Newbery Medal again in 1981 for *Jacob Have I Loved*, a book dealing with sibling rivalry.

Katherine Paterson lives in Vermont and continues to write books for young and old alike.

## Ideas for Pre-reading Activities

1. *Research and Discussion:* Do some research on the late 1960s and early 1970s. Discuss the following with your teacher and other students:

- hippies
- Vietnam War
- “peaceniks” and the peace movements
- women’s liberation

Write a one- to two-page paper on something you find interesting about this period of U.S. History.

2. *Music:* Listen to the music Jess and the other children sang in music class. Look for the song titles: *My Beautiful Balloon*, *This Land is Your Land*, *Free to Be You and Me*, *Blowing in the Wind*, and *God Bless America*. Check your library for recordings of these songs. Students may have parents, grandparents or other relatives who have recordings of these songs.
3. *Map Work:* Use a Washington D.C. map and locate the Smithsonian Museum, the National Gallery, and other national monuments and historic sites in the city. Use a United States map and locate Washington D.C. and surrounding states: Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware.
4. *Reading:* The name “Terabithia” comes from C.S. Lewis’s books about the imaginary land of Narnia. This place is actually spelled *Terebinthia*. It is an island that appears in the book *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. If you have never read Lewis’s books, you may wish to begin with *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the first book Lewis wrote about Narnia.



## Chapters 1 & 2

### Vocabulary:

A word is *in context* if we read it in the sentence in which it was written. It is *out of context* when it is by itself. The following underlined words are shown in the context of the sentences from the book where they appear. Read the sentences and try to define the underlined words. Then look up the dictionary definition and compare.

1. When you were the only boy smashed between four sisters, and the older two had despised you ever since you stopped letting them dress you up and wheel you around in their rusty old doll carriage . . .

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

2. Not just the first heat but the whole shebang.

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

3. "Any fun," Ellie corrected her primly.

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

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4. Jess made peanut-butter sandwiches for the little girls and himself, and because the kitchen was still hot and almost nauseatingly full of bean smell, the three of them went outside to eat.

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

5. Then her pudgy body shuddered, and she let out a great cry.

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

6. So the students of Lark Creek Elementary sat at their desks all Friday, their hearts thumping with anticipation as they listened to the joyful pandemonium pouring out from the teacher's room, spent their allotted half hours with Miss Edmunds under the spell of her wild beauty and in the snare of her enthusiasms, . . .

pandemonium

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

allotted

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

7. His dad would be home soon, and so would those cagey girls who managed somehow to have all the fun and leave him and their mother with all the work.

Your definition:

Dictionary definition:

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### **Characterization:**

The following sentences give us some insight into Jess's character. Explain what each of these sentences tells you about Jess.

Example: He had never learned to run properly, but he was long-legged for a ten-year-old, and no one had more grit than he.

Jess was a determined boy when he really wanted to do something.

1. Jess had finished all the picking and helped his mother can the beans.
2. "You ought to be in bed," he said huffily, mad at himself for cutting her down.
3. It made Jess ache inside to watch his dad grab the little ones to his shoulder, or lean down and hug them.
4. Because he was more tired than usual, he had to push himself harder.

### **Questions:**

1. What does Jess do in the morning before he begins the milking? What is his ambition?

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2. What does Jess like to do in the privacy of his room?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How is Miss Edmunds different from the other teachers at Lark Creek Elementary? Why do people refer to her as a “hippie”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Miss Edmunds calls Jess the “proverbial diamond in the rough.” What does this mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why does Jess have a hard time deciding if Leslie is a girl or a boy?

**Thinking About the Story:**

6. Describe Jess’s two older sisters. How does Jess seem to feel about them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How does Jess feel about his two younger sisters? Support your answer with examples from the reading.

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8. *Foreshadowing* is a literary technique by which an author gives hints or clues about events that will happen later in the story. At the end of Chapter 1 the author writes:

He thought later how peculiar it was that here was probably the biggest thing in his life, and he had shrugged it off as nothing.

What does this lead you to expect about what Jess just saw? In other words, what is *foreshadowed* in this passage?

9. Jess recalls telling his father that he wanted to be an artist when he grew up. How did his father respond? What “message” did Jess get from this?
10. Miss Edmunds has not yet appeared in the story except in Jess’s recollection. What phrases does the author use to describe Miss Edmunds the way Jess sees her? Give four examples. How realistic do you think Jess is about Miss Edmunds?
11. Jess refers to Miss Edmunds as his “fellow outlaw” and says that they “don’t belong at Lark Creek.” Why do you think Jess feels this way about himself and Miss Edmunds?



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12. In chapter two when Jess talks to Miss Edmunds about his picture, she tells him he is “unusually talented” and to “keep it up.” Jess believes that this means she thinks he is the best. Do you think she thinks he is the best? What do you think she means? Explain.

**Dig Deeper:**

13. Compare your family to Jess’s family. How are they alike? How are they different?
14. How would you describe Jess’s relationship with his father?
15. Read Ephesians 5:33–6:4. What are the general lessons in these verses about relationships within the family? In what ways does Jess show love and respect toward some family members? In what ways could Jess’s family improve their relationships with each other?
16. Do you see a need for improvement within your own family? What can you do to help strengthen the relationships within your family?

## Chapters 3 & 4

### Vocabulary:

Underline the best word or phrase on the right that comes closest in definition to the word on the left.

- |                            |                 |             |            |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. <b>roused</b>           | hurried         | awoke       | slowed     |
| 2. <b>smirked</b>          | conceited smile | giggled     | choked     |
| 3. <b>distribution</b>     | signing         | sorting     | giving out |
| 4. <b>“pure repulsive”</b> | loud            | rough       | loathsome  |
| 5. <b>conspicuous</b>      | knocked down    | obvious     | rejected   |
| 6. <b>sarcasm</b>          | criticism       | kindness    | anger      |
| 7. <b>grudgingly</b>       | willingly       | reluctantly | loudly     |
| 8. <b>consolation</b>      | comfort         | knowledge   | reminder   |
| 9. <b>melodic</b>          | very soft       | audible     | musical    |
| 10. <b>ominously</b>       | dangerously     | quickly     | amusingly  |
| 11. <b>intoxicated</b>     | confused        | full        | drunken    |
| 12. <b>tyrants</b>         | pirates         | despots     | managers   |
| 13. <b>sacred</b>          | private         | dedicated   | unknown    |
| 14. <b>solemn</b>          | small           | quick       | stately    |

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**Similes:**

A *simile* is a figure of speech used to describe something through comparison. A *simile* use words such as *like* or *as* to indicate that a comparison is taking place. For example: “The stars sparkled *like* diamonds on black velvet.” In this simile stars are being compared to diamonds.

Find and complete these similes from Chapters 3 and 4. Then write down the two things being compared in each. The first one is done for you as an example.

1. Surprise swooshed up from the class like steam from a released radiator cap.

sudden surprise compares to released steam

2. Jess planned to give old Fulcher a *le-etle* surprise come noon. It was as though he had \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ compares to \_\_\_\_\_

3. The boys quivered on the edges of their seats like \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ compares to \_\_\_\_\_

4. Gary lowered his head like \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ compares to \_\_\_\_\_

5. . . . she gave him a look with those blue eyes of hers that made him zing

like \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ compares to \_\_\_\_\_

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6. He was drifting, drifting like \_\_\_\_\_  
back and forth across the blue.

\_\_\_\_\_ compares to \_\_\_\_\_

7. There were parts of the woods that Jess did not like. Dark places where it was  
almost like \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ compares to \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions:**

1. What is meant by the term “first impressions”? Describe how Leslie looks the first day of school and compare it to what the other children wear. What impression does Leslie make?
2. Why does Jess ask Leslie to join the races at recess?
3. Jess can't imagine why anyone would choose to leave the suburbs for a place like Lark Creek. Why have Leslie's parents moved to Lark Creek?

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4. When Jess is assigned to write about his favorite hobby, what does he choose to write about? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How does Jess feel as he listens to Leslie's composition about scuba diving?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What happens when Jess tries to draw "the quivering life about him"?

**Thinking About the Story:**

7. Why do you think Jess won't show his drawing to Gary Fulcher?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. There seem to be unwritten social rules regarding what one did or didn't do on the playground. What are some of these "rules"? How does Leslie break these rules?



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9. In Chapter 3 as Jess watches each heat, he becomes more sure that he will win. When Leslie reaches the finish line three feet ahead of him, what is his reaction? What is the reaction of the other boys?
  
10. Why do you think Jess challenges Gary Fulcher a second time on Leslie's behalf?
  
11. Why do you think Jess avoids Leslie the rest of the day?
  
12. The author writes:

Caught in the pure delight of [the singing], Jess turned and his eyes met Leslie's. He smiled at her. What the heck? There wasn't any reason he couldn't. What was he scared of anyhow? Lord. Sometimes he acted like the original yellow-bellied sapsucker. He nodded and smiled again. She smiled back. 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.

What do you think is this "new season" in Jess's life? (*Discuss: Why is it important to "choose deliberately" in order to make changes for the better?*)

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13. Leslie and Jess create Terabithia because, as Leslie says, “We need a place, . . . just for us.” Why do you think Leslie feels they need such a place?

14. Near the end of Chapter 4 the author writes:

Leslie was more than his friend. She was his other, more exciting self—his way to Terabithia and all the worlds beyond.

Explain what the author means by this.

**Dig Deeper:**

15. What are two fears of Jess’s that we learn about in this section of reading? How does Jess feel about having these fears?

Is it wrong to feel afraid, or are some fears okay? Explain your answer.

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16. There are many words of comfort in the Psalms. Read Psalm 3:5,6; Psalm 23:4; and Psalm 56:3, 4. Who or what is the source of comfort mentioned in these verses? Considering these verses, what can you do when you feel afraid?
  
17. Leslie is very obviously different from the other students at Lark Creek in the way she dresses, in her hobbies, and in the way she lives. Jess, on the other hand, feels different on the inside, but tries very hard to appear like the other boys on the outside. How does he try to fit in? Does Leslie try to fit in? How can you tell?

Is it important to you to fit in to your group of peers? If so, why is it important? How do you try to fit in? If you don't see it as important, explain why.

18. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–23. In these verses Paul talks about becoming “all things to all men.” What does he mean by this? What is his purpose for doing so?

Considering these verses, what might be a good reason for wanting to fit in with your group of peers?

## Chapters 5 & 6

### **Vocabulary:**

Define the following words using a dictionary if necessary. Then use each word in a sentence.

1. vigorously:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

2. regicide:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

3. parapets:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

4. surplus:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

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5. desperate:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

6. sneer:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

7. prescribed:

Dictionary definition:

Your sentence:

**Metaphors:**

A *metaphor*, like a simile, is a figure of speech used to describe something through comparison. But unlike a simile, a *metaphor* does not use words such as *like* or *as* to indicate that a comparison is taking place. In a metaphor one thing is said to *be* something else. For example: “The trees reached *long, black fingers* toward the sky”. In this metaphor the branches of the trees are simply referred to as long, black fingers.

Read each of the following sentences and indicate what the *metaphors* in these sentences are comparing. The chapter where each sentence is found is indicated. You may wish to check the context of the sentences to determine the comparison being made. See the example below.

Example: Leslie liked to make up stories about the giants that threatened the peace of Terabithia, but they both knew that the real giant in their lives was Janice Avery.

the problem they have to face is being compared to a giant.



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1. (Chapter 2) But it was [Miss Edmunds] who was the diamond, sparkling out of that muddy, grassless, dirty-brick setting.

\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to a diamond.

\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to a muddy, grassless, dirty-brick setting

2. (Chapter 3) Mrs. Myers' face had lost its lemon-pie smile.

\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to a lemon pie.

3. (Chapter 5) Lord, there was no escape. He'd have to fight the female gorilla now.

\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to a female gorilla.

4. (Chapter 6) "Nobody with any sense would call that stick a girl."

\_\_\_\_\_ is being compared to a stick.

**Questions:**

1. How do Janice Avery and her friends terrorize the younger girls at school?

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2. Why does May Belle want Jess to fight Janice Avery?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Instead of fighting with Janice, what do Leslie and Jess do to get revenge?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. When their plan to get revenge succeeds, how does Jess feel about having done it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why does Jess think May Belle should have something special this Christmas?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What does Jess give Leslie for Christmas? What does Leslie give Jess for Christmas? How does Leslie's gift show that she understands Jess?

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**Thinking About the Story:**

7. Why do you think Jess ends up feeling sorry for Janice?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What happens that makes Jess's father angry on Christmas morning? Why do you think this makes him angry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Why do you think it doesn't seem like Christmas to Jess until he meets up with Leslie?

**Dig Deeper:**

10. Read Leviticus 19:17, 18 and Romans 12:17–21. What do these verses tell us about revenge? What do they tell us about how we should treat other people?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Considering the above verses, did Leslie and Jess do the right thing when they played the trick on Janice Avery? What could Leslie and Jess have done to try to resolve the situation between May Belle and Janice Avery while still following what is commanded in these verses?

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12. At the beginning of Chapter 5 the author writes:

Leslie liked to make up stories about the giants that threatened the peace of Terabithia, but they both knew that the real giant in their lives was Janice Avery.

Are there “giants” in your life—people or circumstances that you find difficult to face? List one or more here. Write down some ideas for resolving these situations while following what is commanded in the above verses.

## Chapters 7 & 8

### Vocabulary:

Match the words from the word box with their definitions below. Then find the words in the word search puzzle on the next page.

*Word Box*

---

inclined	sanctuary	anxiety	nuisance
tidings	brilliance	garish	obliged
dregs	vile	complacent	exiled

---

1. \_\_\_\_\_ leaned toward something or had a tendency toward it
2. \_\_\_\_\_ banished—like Mr. Burke did to Prince Terrien
3. \_\_\_\_\_ sediment; or the most worthless part of something—how Jess regarded the end of winter.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ something that is bothersome—like P.T.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ showy and gaudy—like the old wallpaper.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ splendor and brightness—a quality of the golden room
7. \_\_\_\_\_ news
8. \_\_\_\_\_ compelled; bound—the way Jess felt about helping Janice Avery.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ repulsive, wicked—Leslie tried to think of a word like this to describe Janice’s friends.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ painful uneasiness of mind—what Jess felt when he thought Leslie would tell her parents about Terabithia.

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11. \_\_\_\_\_ self-satisfied and unconcerned—like Miss Bessie.  
12. \_\_\_\_\_ a sacred place, such as a church

G V K P Z I N C L I N E D  
C D T K H S A I Y W L X E  
C A Y T E I X N A M R B L  
O I G V K N U D T L P O I  
M X I D R W Q U R B J N X  
P D C S E R H T R E Y U E  
L E V O N H S I R A G I D  
A K M F B E L D P L W S E  
C R B U T L Z I M H F A K  
E I S T I I I N C L V N Y  
N M U A X V X G N T Y C E  
T S N G B I R S E R R E L  
G C O M F S H R E D W Q O  
E N Y R A U T C N A S P B

**Questions:**

1. Why does Leslie become too busy to go to Terabithia and spend time with Jess?

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2. When Leslie and Jess return to Terabithia, they go to the grove of pines to give thanks. Why does Leslie address her thanks to the “Spirits of the Grove” as opposed to God?
  
3. How does Leslie help Janice Avery?
  
4. How does Jess react when Leslie says she’d like to go to church with him on Easter? Why do you think he reacts this way?
  
5. Why doesn’t Jess’s mother want Leslie to go to church with them?

**Thinking About the Story:**

6. At the beginning of Chapter 7 the author writes:

Jess tried going to Terabithia alone, but it was no good. It needed Leslie to make the magic. He was afraid he would destroy everything by trying to force the magic on his own, when it was plain that the magic was reluctant to come for him.

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Why do you think Jess is unable to go to Terabithia without Leslie? What do you think the author means by “the magic”?

7. Leslie tells Jess that through spending time working and talking with her father she is learning to “understand” her father. Do you think it’s important to understand our parents? Why or why not?
  
8. Do you think you understand your parents? If so, how did you learn to understand them? If not, what can you do to learn to understand them?
  
9. Jess thinks there is “something weird about a grown man wanting to be friends with his child.” What is your opinion? Is this weird or normal? Explain why you feel as you do.
  
10. Why do you think Jess and Leslie decide to help Janice Avery when earlier in the story they wanted to get revenge on her? Does this indicate any growth in character for Leslie or Jess? Explain your answer.



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11. What seems most important to Jess's mother and older sisters when they go to church? Do you think this is really an important part of going to church? Why or why not?
  
12. Literary *irony* is an incongruity or contrast between what readers expect to happen in a story and what actually happens. Writers can use irony to create humor, to surprise readers, or to help better describe situations or characters. What *irony* about what they believe does Leslie point out after they go to church? What does this scene reveal about Jess and Leslie?
  
13. When Jess admits to Leslie that he believes as May Belle does, how does he feel and act? What words or phrases does the author use to communicate the way Jess feels? Why do you think he feels this way?
  
14. An author will often *foreshadow* events by the way she ends a chapter. Reread the last few paragraphs of Chapter 8. What might the author be *foreshadowing* by the way Chapter 8 ends?

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**Dig Deeper:**

15. What does May Belle believe will happen if a person doesn't believe the Bible? Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Read the following verses and then answer the questions below: Mark 1:9–11; Mark 14:60–62; John 3:16–18; John 14:1–6; Hebrews 9:27, 28.
  - a. Who does God say Jesus is? (See Mark 1:9–11)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Who does Jesus say that he is? (See Mark 14:60–62)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. According to these verses, why did Jesus come to earth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. According to these verses, what is the result if we believe in Jesus? If we don't?

Considering what is taught in these verses, is May Belle right about what she believes?

## Chapters 9–11

### Vocabulary:

An *antonym* of a word is another word that is opposite in meaning from the original word. For example: *textured* is an antonym of *smooth*. For each of the following vocabulary words write down an antonym.

1. peculiar:
2. sodden:
3. sporadically:
4. solemnly:
5. horrid:
6. idly:
7. liberated:

### Questions:

1. What has happened to the dry creek bed that Jess and Leslie cross into Terabithia?



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7. When Jess walks in after he gets home from Washington his mother starts to cry. Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What does Jess do when he is told about Leslie's death?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Jess wakes up in the night thinking he has had a bad dream. He imagines a conversation with Leslie. What is it about?

**Thinking About the Story:**

10. Why do you think Jess feels that he can not hang back from crossing the creek if Leslie never even hesitates?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Jess knows that Leslie won't make fun of him if he confides his fears to her. Why do you think that he still can't bring himself to tell her?

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12. The author writes: “Entering the gallery was like stepping inside the pine grove . . .” Why do you think the author uses this simile to describe the gallery?

*Foreshadowing:*

13. Leslie’s death may or may not have come as a surprise to readers, but if you look closely at the chapters leading up to Leslie’s death, you will find many instances where the author foreshadowed this event. Look back through Chapters 9 and 10 and write down at least three instances where the author hints at the tragedy to come.

Example: Chapter 9 ends with the sentence: “He hardly slept the rest of the night, listening to the horrid rain and knowing that no matter how high the creek came, Leslie would still want to cross it.”

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14. How does Jess act at breakfast the morning after he finds out Leslie is dead? Why do you think he acts this way?

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15. Why do you think he asks his father “What little girl?”

**Dig Deeper:**

16. How do you view death? Is it frightening? Is it something to be anticipated? Explain your view and why you feel as you do.

17. What do each of the following verses teach us about death?

a. Psalm 139:13–16

b. 1 Corinthians 15:54–57

c. 2 Corinthians 5:1

d. 1 Peter 1:3–5

## Chapters 12 & 13

### Vocabulary:

Read each of the following phrases paying attention to the usage of the underlined word. Indicate whether the underlined word is being used as a noun—an object—or a verb—an action. Then define each of the words as they are used in the sentence.

1. have the body cremated  
Usage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Definition:
2. into the castle stronghold  
Usage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Definition:
3. his throat constricting  
Usage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Definition:
4. part of a great procession  
Usage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Definition:
5. into thy hands I commend her  
Usage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Definition:



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6. even the predators

Usage: \_\_\_\_\_

Definition:

7. in solemn emphasis

Usage: \_\_\_\_\_

Definition:

### Questions

1. What different thoughts and emotions does Jess experience while he and his parents pay their respects at the Burkes' house?
2. Jess expresses his doubts to his father about whether or not Leslie would go to heaven. What does his father say to comfort Jess?
3. Why does May Belle follow Jess to Terabithia?
4. When May Belle admits to being scared while crossing the creek, what does Jess tell her?

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5. When Jess recalls Leslie going into the girls' room to see Janice Avery, what does he realize?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. When Jess returns to school, what has happened that he notices as soon as he walks into class?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What causes Jess's view of "Monster Mouth" Myers to change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What do the Burkes do now that Leslie is gone?

**Thinking About the Story:**

9. Jess feels that Leslie has left him just when he needed her most.

She had made him leave his old self behind and come into her world, and then before he was really at home in it, but too late to go back, she had left him stranded there—like an astronaut wandering about on the moon. Alone.

What would you say are these two worlds that Jess feels stranded between?

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10. In the context of the whole book, what is the significance of the conversation between Jess and his father in Chapter 12?
  
11. When Jess brings a wreath into the grove of pines he says “Father, into Thy hands I commend her spirit.” Where do these words come from? What do they mean in this context?
  
12. After Jess makes a funeral wreath for Leslie and has a procession for her something happens inside him. What is it? Why do you think it happened? What simile is used to describe this feeling?
  
13. Jess thinks that sometimes “you need to give people something that’s for them, not just something that makes you feel good giving it.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
  
14. Jess recalls the change that has occurred in him since Leslie came into his life. What does he see has changed?

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15. What does he believe he still has to do? How does he begin doing this with May Belle at the end of the book?

**Dig Deeper:**

16. In the last chapter, “Building the Bridge,” Jess invites May Belle to become the Queen of Terabithia. What is the “bridge” that Jess is building?
  
17. What other “bridges” have been built by the end of the story?

**Optional Writing Activity:**

Have you ever had a loved one die? What comforted and helped you through that time? What are some things that might have helped you? Write a one- to two-page essay discussing these questions. If you have never known anyone who has died, imagine what it would be like to lose a best friend and explain in your essay how you think you might deal with it.

## Ideas for Post-reading Activities

1. *Field Trips:* If you live in the Washington, D.C. area, take a field trip to the Smithsonian Museum or the National Gallery. If not, check your local library for travel books and/or videos on Washington, D.C. Use them to write a two- to three-minute speech telling about the place in Washington you would like to visit and why.
2. *Creative writing:* Select one or more of the following projects for a creative writing project.
  - Short Story: Write a short story about an imaginary land like Terabithia. Describe some of the adventures you or your main character have there.
  - Eulogy: A *eulogy* is a public speech or a formal written tribute to a person who has died. A eulogy praises its subject's virtues or achievements. Select a person who you admire and write a eulogy. Describe the person's life, the things for which they will be remembered, and why they will be missed. Select either a person who you knew personally, or someone famous who has recently died.
  - Elegy: An *elegy* is a lyric poem usually written in tribute to a person who has died recently. It is formal and dignified. Write a poem in tribute to someone you knew personally, or someone famous who has recently died. You may find examples of elegies in many poetry anthologies.
3. *Art Project:* Using paints, pastels, charcoal, pen and ink, or colored pencils, illustrate a scene from *Bridge to Terabithia*, or create a cover illustration for the book.

## Additional Resources

### Other Books by Katherine Paterson:

#### *Fiction:*

<i>Angels &amp; Other Strangers:</i> <i>Family Christmas Stories</i>	grades 1 & up, published by HarperCollins
<i>Come Sing, Jimmy Jo</i>	grades 5 & up, published by Puffin
<i>Flip-Flop Girl</i>	grades 4–6, published by Viking
<i>The Great Gilly Hopkins</i>	grades 5 & up, published by HarperCollins
<i>Jacob Have I Loved</i>	grades 7 & up, published by HarperCollins
<i>Preacher's Boy</i>	grades 7 & up, published by Clarion Books
<i>Lyddie</i>	grades 5–9, published by Puffin
<i>The Master Puppeteer</i>	grades 5 & up, published by Avon
<i>A Midnight Clear: Twelve Family Stories</i> <i>for the Christmas Season</i>	grades 5 & up, published by Dutton
<i>Of Nightingales That Weep</i>	grades 5 & up, published by HarperCollins
<i>Park's Quest</i>	grades 5 & up, published by Puffin
<i>Rebels of the Heavenly Kingdom</i>	grades 7 & up, published by Puffin
<i>The Sign of the Chrysanthemum</i>	grades 7 & up, published by HarperCollins
<i>The Smallest Cow in the World</i>	grades 1–3, published by HarperCollins
<i>The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks</i>	grades 1–3, published by HarperCollins

#### *Nonfiction:*

<i>Gates of Excellence: On Reading and</i> <i>Writing Books for Children</i>	published by Viking
<i>The Spying Heart: More Thoughts on</i> <i>Reading and Writing Books for Children</i>	published by Dutton
<i>Who Am I?</i>	published by Eerdmans

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**Books of Related Interest:**

- Welcome Home, Jellybean* by Marlene Fanta Shyer, grades 3–7,  
published by Simon and Schuster
- Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr, grades 3–5, published by  
Dell
- Treasure in an Oatmeal Box* by Ken Gire, grades 4–7. published by  
NavPress
- On My Honor* by Marion Dane Bauer, grades 4–7,  
published by Dell
- A Taste of Blackberries* by Doris Buchanan Smith, grades 3–6,  
published by HarperCollins
- Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt, grades 5–8, published by  
Farrar, Straus & Giroux