

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Bridge to Terabithia

by Katherine Paterson

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Bridge to Terabithia

Note to the Teacher

Bridge to Terabithia tells the story of Jesse Aarons, an artistic, eleven-year-old boy from the rural South who wants to be the fastest runner in fifth grade. However, when his new neighbor, Leslie Burke, daringly defies her stereotypical role by outrunning all the boys, a new friendship begins. With the imagination and creativity of young children, Jesse and Leslie create a land of their own that they call Terabithia. Simply by swinging over the creek, their world is transformed into an enchanted safe haven where the bullies of fifth grade are forgotten in exchange for fantasies and magic kingdoms. Thus, they make their way through the adventures of school and Terabithia until a sudden tragedy forces Jesse to confront all that Leslie taught him about courage, friendship, and the power of imagination.

Katherine Paterson was born in 1931 in China, where her father served as a missionary. She lived her childhood there until her family was evacuated to the U.S., as a result of World War II, eventually living in Winchester, Virginia. She went on to study English and American literature at King College in Bristol, Tennessee; after college, Katherine taught for one year in Lovettsville, Virginia.

After several failed attempts at writing fiction, Paterson published her first children's novel: *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum* (1976). One year later, she wrote *Bridge to Terabithia*, her most popular book, which won the 1978 Newbery Medal.

All references come from the Harper Trophy edition of *Bridge to Terabithia*, Copyright 1977.

Bridge to Terabithia

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. write an essay that explains and supports the following statement: *Bridge to Terabithia* is about a life-changing friendship.
2. identify and discuss the following themes in the novel and cite comments and incidents to support them:
 - True friendship is a special gift exchanged between people that involves the mutual giving of love, acceptance, and respect with no conditions.
 - Although every person is different, people need to be respected and appreciated as individuals. They need to learn to be themselves and rule their own lives.
 - People dislike change because it involves the unknown, which may be frightening; however, they need to recognize that conformity can stifle learning, self-expression, and individuality.
 - Knowledge, self-confidence, and imagination are more powerful and more valuable than popularity, physical strength, or money.
 - Death, especially the sudden death of someone close, is not easy to understand, and people accept loss in different ways.
3. infer the author's definition of courage and provide support with examples of how it may be shown and acquired.
4. define the following literary terms and illustrate the terms with examples from the book:
 - plot
 - setting
 - character
 - point of view
 - conflict
 - foreshadowing
 - symbolism

Chapter Three – The Fastest Kid in the Fifth Grade

VOCABULARY

conspicuous – obvious
grudgingly – bitterly, resentfully
quivered – trembled with anticipation
swooshed – rushed up

1. What does Leslie wear on the first day of school, and how does it separate her from the rest of the class?

2. Who is Gary Fulcher? Why is he important to Jess?

3. Besides the way she is dressed, what are some other ways that Leslie does not fit in with the students?

4. Why does Jess suggest that Leslie race? What happens when she does?

5. Why does Jess ignore Leslie on the school bus?

Chapter Seven – The Golden Room

VOCABULARY

dregs – remains
dumbfounded – surprised, astonished
nuisance – a bother, an inconvenience
obliged – required, duty-bound

1. When Leslie cannot go to Terabithia, why does Jess not go alone?

2. Why does Leslie not go to Terabithia anymore?

3. Why does Jess dislike Leslie’s father, Bill?

4. What eventually makes Jess happy about helping fix up the Perkins place?

5. While redecorating the house, what does Judy mean when she says, “It would be like putting a veil on the Mona Lisa”? What literary device is her comment an example of?
