

## THE HUNDRED DRESSES

### Discussion Material

Written in 1944, Estes' *The Hundred Dresses* tells the story of little Wanda Petronski. Wanda is different from her friends in so many ways. She is from another country. She has a funny name. She doesn't have any money. She doesn't have a mother and she wears the same faded blue dress every day to school. But when asked, "How many dresses do you have Wanda?" She will always answer, "A hundred, all lined up." The children tease and make fun of Wanda mercilessly. And then one day, she disappears!

*The Hundred Dresses* is a poignant, empathetic and touching story of one child's differences...and how people around her allow those differences to create walls of division. As you discover in the book, Wanda does indeed have a hundred dresses and her gentle example of strength, honesty and forgiveness is what allows her friends to learn a valuable lesson in the end.

This book is a powerful reminder for all of us to celebrate diversity in our relationships...and to reach to those we see who are hurting or rejected. This book tenderly points out to us the importance of being Christ to one another by showing kindness, mercy and compassion even to those who are different.

Read this book. Enjoy this book. Discuss this book with your children today!

#### **High Level Discussion Questions:**

**Who are the main characters in this story? Wanda, Peggy, Maggie, old man Svenson**

**What room number was their classroom? 13 teacher's name: Miss Mason**

**What was different about Wanda Petronski? she lives with her brother Jake and her father, had a funny name, didn't have any friends, she came to school alone and went home alone, always wore a faded blue dress that didn't hang right, lived in Boggins Heights, came from Russia, doesn't have much money, she really did a hundred dresses, she moved away.**

**What happened with Wanda at school ? Why do you think it happened?**

**What do you think the kids learned at school from Wanda? What did you learn? Honesty, compassion, understanding, not judging, accepting people for who they are...what would you have done in this situation?**

**What is the important message in this book? We are all different.**

### **Chapter One: Wanda**

Why is it relevant that the class was reciting the Gettysburg Address? What do those lines from the Address (pg. 7) mean to you?

### **Chapter Two: The Dresses Game**

Why is Maddie embarrassed by the questions Peggy asks Wanda?

Why do you think Maddie stays quiet when she is upset by the dresses game?

### **Chapter Three: A Bright Blue Day**

What does Maddie mean when she thinks to herself "afterwards it didn't seem like bright blue weather anymore, although the weather had not changed in the slightest"?

### **Chapter Four: The Contest**

Do you agree with Maddie when she says, "Peggy was the best liked girl in the whole room"? Peggy could not possibly do anything that was really wrong."

### **Chapter Five: *The Hundred Dresses***

How did you feel when you heard the note from Wanda's father?

Do you agree that Maddie's silence was as bad as Peggy's teasing? Why or why not?

### **Chapter Six: Up On Boggins Heights**

Why was Peggy trying to think up excuses for her behavior?

### **Chapter Seven: The Letter to Room 13**

Why did Wanda give those dresses to Peggy and Maddie? Would you have done something similar if you were in Wanda's place?