

Bridge to Terabithia by Katharine Paterson

Summary

Jess Aarons' greatest ambition is to be the fastest runner in the fifth grade. He's been practicing all summer and can't wait to see his classmates' faces when he beats them all. But on the first day of school, a new kid, a new girl, boldly crosses over to the boys' side of the playground and outruns everyone. That's not a very promising beginning for a friendship, but Jess and Leslie Burke become inseparable. It doesn't matter to Jess that Leslie dresses funny, or that her family has a lot of money - but no TV. Leslie has imagination. Together, she and Jess create Terabithia, a magical kingdom in the woods where the two of them reign as king and queen, and their imaginations set the only limits.

128 pages, 4th grade and up

Discussion questions

Spoiler alert! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Why is running so important to Jess?
2. Jess's mother appears to treat him differently than she treats his four sisters. How does that make Jess feel about himself?
3. How does Miss Edmunds respond to Jess's art? Why is that important to him?
4. Why is Leslie unhappy? Does she feel comfortable with the other kids at school, besides Jess? Why or why not?
5. Why do Jess and Leslie create Terabithia? What does Terabithia represent for them?
6. Jess feels that, "Leslie was more than his friend. She was his other, more exciting self- his way to Terabithia and all the worlds beyond." What does this mean?
7. At first, Jess's sister Brenda thinks he doesn't care that Leslie has died. Why does she think that?
8. What did Leslie's friendship teach Jess?
9. Why does Jess throw Leslie's present into the gully? How does he feel about her dying?
10. How do you think Jess will live his life differently because of his friendship with Leslie? What do you think Jess will do with his life?

Snacks: Try snacks like the ones Jess and Leslie shared at their secret spot: dried fruit, crackers, and peanut butter.