



Baby
by Patricia MacLachlan

Teacher's Guide
Written By Kathy Sammis



**CLASSROOM
FAVORITES**

A Perma-Bound Production

Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Larkin lives on a Northeast coast island with her parents and her grandmother Byrd. Papa is editor of the island newspaper and tap dances every night before dinner. Mama is an artist with a studio in the home.

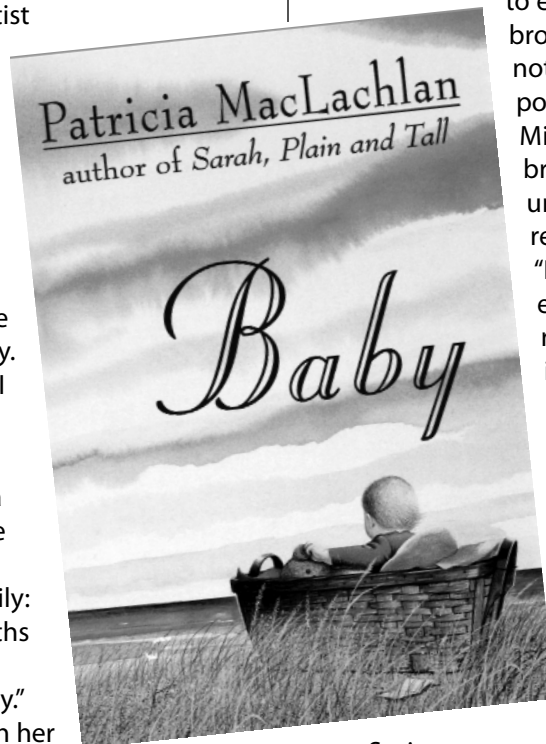
Arriving home after seeing off the last summer ferry, Larkin, her best friend Lab Baldelli, her parents, and Byrd are astonished to find a baby in a basket. In the basket is a note from the baby's mother: "This is Sophie. ... I cannot take care of her now, but I know she will be safe with you....You will be a good family. ... I will come back for her one day. I love her."

Papa reluctantly agrees with Mama to keep Sophie and not contact the authorities, but the baby's arrival reveals the problem in Larkin's family: Larkin's baby brother died six months ago after living only one day; he is buried in a grave marked only "Baby." Larkin yearns to talk about this with her parents, but neither Mama nor Papa will utter a word about the subject. Papa warns Larkin not to love Sophie, and they both worry that Mama already does love the baby, who is delightful and engaging. Later, Papa tells Mama that Sophie "is not a substitute." Byrd tells Lab and Larkin that caring for the baby "is a very important thing to do, for Sophie and especially for your mother and father. But it will not be easy"—because Sophie's mother is sure to come back.

When the new school year begins, the librarian, Ms. Minifred, tells Larkin and Lab's class that this year they will talk about the power of language, of words, and of how words can change you. Larkin wonders about when there are no words, about how silence can also change you. Meanwhile, Sophie develops: she starts to walk, speak words, and imitate the game of rock, scis-

sors, paper that Papa has taught her. And a short note comes from Sophie's mother expressing her love.

That winter, Ms. Minifred introduces Larkin and her class-mates to poetry, which the librarian—and Byrd—says expresses all the world, all the moments, all the feelings. Larkin, denied the opportunity to express her grief about her baby brother's death because her parents will not speak about the tragedy, scorns poetry as "just words"—until Ms. Minifred reveals that she lost an older brother when she was twelve and was unable to accept his death until she read Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Dirge Without Music," which said exactly what she felt: "I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground./So it is and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:/...I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned." The poem gives words to Larkin's feelings, and she is finally able to tell Mama that they must talk about the baby's death. Mama in turn shows Larkin a painting of the baby that she is working on.



Spring comes, and after an April beach picnic, Larkin, her parents, Byrd, Sophie, and Lab return to the house to discover Sophie's mother waiting for them on the porch. Life, as Ms. Minifred once said, is made up of circles. Sophie's mother, Julia, reveals that she left Sophie with Larkin's family because Sophie's father had faced an operation and a long convalescence that would demand all of Julia's time; Julia had no suitable family with whom to leave Sophie, so she chose Larkin's family. As Julia carries Sophie aboard the departing ferry, Sophie and Papa sign rock, paper, scissors to each other with their hands. Back home immediately after, Byrd stops Larkin's parents from their attempt to retreat into the familiar silence and, backed by Larkin's statement, "Even Sophie had words," insists that Mama and Papa must talk about Larkin's dead baby brother. They do, and the family finally comes to terms with its grief.

Soon, a graveside service is held commemorating the baby's brief life, and the new headstone reads "William," Larkin's choice of his name.

Throughout the novel, some chapters have been prefaced by a short page in italics describing an older Sophie's vague yet comforting memories of her experiences living with Larkin's family. In the novel's final chapter, Sophie returns to the island for Byrd's funeral, ten years after leaving as a toddler. Her strongest memory now is of a face, and when she sees Papa at the cemetery, she smiles at him and holds out her hand: Rock, paper, scissors.

Timeline

Six months before	Larkin's baby brother dies after living only one day. Her parents won't speak of the tragedy. The headstone in the cemetery on their small New England island reads only "Baby."
End of summer	Larkin's family finds a baby left in a basket at their home. A note says her name is Sophie.
Through the year	Larkin's family keeps the baby and cares for her with love; Larkin studies poetry at school. Through poetry and the prompting of her friend, Lalo, Larkin is finally able to express her grief over her brother's death.
Next summer	Sophie's mother, Julia, returns. She had left Sophie because she needed to care for Sophie's father, who was seriously ill. Sophie leaves with her mother on the ferry; Sophie and Papa sign rock, paper, scissors to each other.
Later	Larkin's grandmother, Byrd, insists that Larkin's parents talk about their loss. Finally, they are able to come to terms with their grief, and they have a memorial service, with a new headstone and the name "William" on it.
Ten years later	Sophie and Julia return for Byrd's funeral. Sophie, who has vague, happy memories of her time on the island, recognizes

Papa. She gives him a sign: rock, paper, scissors.

Author Sketch

Patricia Pritzkau MacLachlan was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, on March 3, 1938, the only child of a school-teacher. She grew up in Minnesota; but the western landscape and prairie are a continuing influence on her. In 1962, she married Robert MacLachlan, a clinical psychologist, and also earned her B.A. from the University of Connecticut. She taught English at a Connecticut junior high school from 1963-1979, while also raising the three MacLachlan children. When the children got older, she decided to make writing her full-time career, drawing on her experiences of family life, both as a wife and mother and as a child herself. Especially since winning the Newbery Medal for *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, MacLachlan has frequently lectured and conducted creative writing workshops; she is also a member of a long-standing writers' group. She has been a visiting lecturer at Smith College since 1986 and has homes in Williamsburg and Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Along with her husband, she loves to read and play chamber music.

Critic's Corner

Baby is typical of MacLachlan's books in that it focuses on families and relationships, grounded in the details of everyday life; her subject is expressed with warmth, sensitivity, and perceptiveness in a lyrical and spare style. The *New York Times Book Review* described *Baby* as a novel "of considerable charm,...as satisfying as a classically rhymed poem...wise and frequently funny." *Booklist* commented that "the spare lyricism of MacLachlan's writing and the physical immediacy of daily life with this very real baby will move the most hardened cynic." *VOYA* admired the novel as "a beautiful and poignant story of one family's capacity for love and loss....It is a book to be read aloud....The book's timeless quality, descriptive passages, warm characterizations, and little Sophie add up to a marvelous read." *School Library Journal* praised the story as "deeply felt" and told with "simple elegance," adding, "Especially impressive is [MacLachlan's] ability to invest the simplest human actions and physical events with emotion and love." *Publishers Weekly* concluded, "MacLachlan's style remains masterly. It is difficult to read her sentences only once, and even more difficult to part from her novel." Most reviewers called *Baby* a novel for readers of all ages; as *The Horn Book Magazine* explained, "Is this a book for adults, young adults, or children? Hard to say,

but it is one that will find its own audience, for it can neither be over-looked nor easily forgotten." *Baby* was an ALA Notable Children's Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults.

General Objectives

1. To analyze the nature of grief and the need to express it
2. To explore the power of words and the ways in which silences also speak volumes
3. To consider the importance of poetry in people's lives
4. To examine the nature of relationships within a family
5. To discuss the ways in which barriers can arise between young people and their parents and block communication
6. To become familiar with aspects of island living
7. To explore the power of memories from very early childhood

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the reasons why Sophie has come to live with Larkin's family
2. To examine the effects Sophie has on Larkin's family
3. To identify the problem that is seriously affecting Larkin's family and the relationships between family members
4. To analyze the ways in which the novel is about the power of words, and how poetry helps Larkin express her feelings
5. To trace the ways in which the members of Larkin's family are finally able to acknowledge and work through their grief, and how this improves the family members' relationships with one another
6. To understand what Larkin's family contributes to Sophie's development, and how Sophie's memories reveal this
7. To identify elements of the author's writing style
8. To note the ways in which the author melds past and present in the novel

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. Mama was a walking landscape. (p. 7)
(Mama has been painting an island scene, a landscape, and she is covered with flecks and smears of paint in the island color —so she is a "walking landscape." When Mama gets herself covered with paint

like this, it means she is restless, that something is bothering her This is an early hint that Larkin's family is troubled by something.)

2. faculties...facilities (p. 8)
(This is one of MacLachlan's frequent touches of humor. When Byrd says she is pleased to have all her faculties at age seventy, she means she is glad to have all her mental powers, she is not losing her mental sharpness because of age. Alcohol once induced Byrd to say "facilities" instead, a word often used to refer to bathrooms.)
3. the last summer ferry (p. 9)
(A ferry is a boat used to carry—ferry—passengers, vehicles, and/or goods across water The departure of the last summer ferry leaves the island in quiet possession of its year-round inhabitants, something that leaves everyone but Papa feeling a little restless.)
4. the breakwater (p. 15)
(A breakwater is a structure, like a wall, built out into the water to protect a harbor or beach from the force of the waves. The island ferry blows its whistle as it reaches the breakwater either coming in or going out, something Sophie remembers on her return trip to the island ten years after her departure.)
5. playing patty-cake (p. 24)
(Patty-cake is a two-person hand-clapping game commonly played with babies. The fact that Sophie knows how to play patty-cake means that she has had a loving upbringing by someone who has taken the time to play with her; she has not been neglected. This also foreshadows the rock, paper, scissors game motif later in the novel.)
6. Tripped the light fantastic (p. 27)
(This is a line from one of the songs Papa tap dances to, "East Side, West Side." It is slang for "went dancing.")
7. tap dance (p. 5)... soft shoe (p. 28)
(Tap dance is a type of art dance in which the toes and heels are tapped quickly and audibly, usually in shoes with metal taps on the toes and heels. Soft shoe is tap dancing done in soft-soled shoes without the metal taps. Papa has tried to teach Larkin the soft-shoe dancing he does, but she hasn't been able to learn. By the novel's end she has.)
8. Milky Way ... Pleiades (p. 28)
(The Milky Way is a broad, irregular band of light that stretches across the night sky caused by the light of multitudes of faint stars. The Pleiades are a cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus that are supposed to be the seven daughters of Atlas who were, according to Greek mythology, turned into stars. Papa talks with Larkin about the constellations in the night sky instead of talking about the baby

boy's death.)

9. rock, paper, scissors (p. 34)

(This is a familiar children's game. Contestants simultaneously bring one hand out from behind their backs. A fist represents rock, a flat and open palm represents paper, and two outstretched fingers represent scissors. Rock wins against scissors, because rock crushes scissors; scissors wins against paper, because they cut paper; paper wins against rock because it covers rock. Papa is teaching Sophie the hand motions of the game even though she is too young to understand the game itself, Sophie is entranced by Papa's hands and remembers the gestures long after she has left the island.)

10. redundancy (p. 59)

(In this case, redundancy means needless repetition, for example, "quite excellent" instead of just "excellent." Correcting Portia's use of the expression gives an example of Ms. Minifred's love of words and their correct use, and the fact that Rebel notes the redundancy alerts readers as well as Larkin and Lab about Rebel's degree of literacy and the until-now unsuspected relationship between the school's librarian and janitor.)

11. "Dirge Without Music" (p. 85)

(A dirge is a song or hymn of grief or mourning or in general, a slow, solemn, and sad piece of music. Millay's poem is a song of grief that is not set to music. The poem expresses Larkin's feelings and enables her to insist, for the first time, that Mama must talk to her about her dead baby brother.)

12. poinsettia (p. 92)

(The poinsettia is a traditional Christmas flower with showy red bracts. The color red is one thing an older Sophie remembers from her time on the island including red winter-flowering plants.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Literal Level

1. Why did Sophie's mother abandon her baby? Why did she choose Larkin's family to care for Sophie? What are Sophie's mother's plans?
(Sophie's father was sick and needed an operation; Sophie's mother would have to spend all her time caring for him. She had no one else to entrust Sophie

to; her own father and mother were not good parents, so she would never let them have the child. Instead, Sophie's mother spent time that summer watching people on the island, and she saw that Larkin's family would provide a safe, nurturing home for the baby. She plans to come back for Sophie when Sophie's father is better, or if he dies.)

2. What big problem is affecting Larkin's family and causing problems in Larkin's relationship with her parents?

(Larkin's baby brother died six months ago after living for just one day. Since then, Larkin's parents have not mentioned the baby or his death; they never named him, and he lies beneath a stone engraved only "Baby." Each member of the family is grieving silently for the baby. Unable to discuss his life and death, no one is able to mourn effectively or come to terms with the tragedy. Larkin is very angry with her parents for refusing to talk about all of this with her. She feels her parents have distanced themselves from her emotionally and no longer care about or understand her feelings.)

3. What role does poetry play in people's lives, according to Ms. Minifred, the librarian?

(According to Ms. Minifred, all the world can be found in poetry, all anyone needs to see and hear—all the moments, good and bad, joyous and sad. Poetry can provide a strange and powerful comfort, not because it makes the reader feel better but because it says what the reader feels. This is part of the power of language, the power of words, which can change a person.)

Interpretive Level

4. How does Sophie affect Larkin's family during her stay with them?

(The presence of a baby in the household and the fact that she will eventually leave is a constant reminder of the loss of the baby boy. Sophie's presence underlines the family's unspoken sadness. Nevertheless, they find they are able to love Sophie even though they know she will leave them, as the baby boy did; she opens their hearts, which have been frozen shut by the baby's death. Finally, her departure serves as a catalyst, sparking at last the discussion about the baby's death that Larkin has so desperately needed. Papa and Mama are finally able to name the child and start dealing with their loss.)

5. What do Sophie's memories tell her she has gotten from Larkin's family during her year with them?
(She has been given a feeling of safety and security that shields her from what could have been a dread-

ful trauma from her mother's abandonment of her. In her memories, "the arms that hold her are always safe"; memories, even of crying, do not frighten her. She remembers words like whispers, soft and reassuring. She has been given loving nurturance during a critical year of growth, so she has the foundation of a healthy emotional life and the ability to trust and return love.)

6. In what ways is the novel a story about a search for words?

(In the wake of the baby boy's death, the family has been unable to find the words to mourn and accept the tragedy. Papa tap dances and Mama paints in place of communicating their sadness in words. Larkin, deprived of the solace of words and communication with her parents, is unable to mourn her baby brother. Finally, Larkin finds the words to express her feelings in the Millay poem, and this allows her to communicate those feelings to Mama. The family at last begins to deal with their loss when they use words for it — starting to talk about it and finally giving the baby a name. Throughout this process, baby Sophie is herself gradually discovering words and beginning to talk, expressing her own thoughts and reactions.)

CRITICAL LEVEL

7. Why do you think the author chose to set the novel on an island?

(Answers will vary. The primary advantage of having the novel set on an island is to isolate the action. An abandoned baby can fairly logically become part of an isolated island community without social service authorities having to become involved, and it is presumably easier for Sophie's mother to observe and select a suitable foster family for her baby in a small, isolated community.)

8. How does the author meld past and present in the novel?

(The occasional italicized paragraphs of Sophie's memories are the present—Sophie as an older girl. The elusive fragments of memory are then filled out in following chapters, set in the past of Sophie's year with Larkin's family. The last memory paragraphs immediately precede the final chapter, when Sophie returns to the island ten years after her departure, the present-day girl coming back to reconnect with her past family.)

9. Describe the author's writing style.

(Critics generally describe MacLachlan's style as spare and lyrical, imbued with emotions and deep feeling, and enriched by observant details of every-

day life, skillfully drawn minor characters, and evocative of brief descriptive passages.)

Creative Level

10. Create some more scenes featuring some of the novel's minor characters.
(Answers will vary.)
11. Write a chapter of the novel that describes the contact between Larkin and Sophie after Byrd's death that leads to Sophie's traveling to the island on the ferry with Larkin.
(Answers will vary.)
12. As you begin reading the novel, what gender do you visualize the narrator to be? Why? What finally reveals the narrator's gender? How far into the novel does this occur?
(Answers will vary. We learn that the narrator is a girl at the end of Chapter 2, on page 17, when Lab says Larkin will soon be buying the traditional plaid dress to wear to the first day of school.)

Across the Curriculum

Art

1. Draw or paint landscapes showing the island at different seasons of the year.
2. Create portraits of some of the novel's characters.
3. Create an artwork expressing a poem you have read.

Science

1. Create an illustrated field guide to the island's flora and/or fauna. (Also Art.)
2. Make a booklet or poster showing the different kinds of clouds and explaining the atmospheric conditions that create them. (Also Art.)
3. Lab's mother has very odd ideas about electricity. Explain scientifically just what is wrong with her notions.
4. Larkin comments, "Island snow never lasted." Why would this be the case?
5. Create a poster or illustrated booklet of common constellations of the night sky. Explain the mythological story of what each one is supposed to represent. (Also Art, Social Studies, Language Arts.)

Health

1. Trace the typical stages of early childhood development through the changes in Sophie during her stay with Larkin's family.

Social Studies

1. Study some island communities, and write a paper

describing what is typical about them and different from mainland communities.

2. Suppose a baby were abandoned at your front door. What would the regulations in your community and state require for the care of that baby? Could your family keep the baby as a foster caregivers? If not, what would happen to the baby? Would the baby's parent(s) be guilty of a criminal act for abandoning her or him?
3. Read about some of the recent events in which a foster or adopted baby is removed from his or her foster/adoptive parents after years with them and given to the biological parents. Then discuss with classmates how you think situations like this should best be handled.

Mathematics

1. The age of babies and toddlers is often given in months rather than years. How old is Sophie in months when she first joins Larkin's family? How old in months is she when her mother takes her back? How old in months is she when she returns to the island for Byrd's funeral?
2. Use a computer to calculate the odds involved in various aspects of the rock, paper, scissors game.

Music

1. Find and play for the class the music to the various songs mentioned in the novel, like "East Side, West Side" and "Me and My Shadow."
2. With three classmates, recreate Griffey's musical group playing "Roll Out the Barrel" as the last summer ferry departs.

Language Arts

1. Find other examples of redundant expressions like Portia's "quite excellent."
2. Read other Patricia MacLachlan books that deal with foster or stand-in mothers, and discuss their common theme with classmates.
3. Explain the way in which the point of view of the novel shifts from time to time. Have you read other books that use this device? Describe.
4. Read some more of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poetry.
5. Find examples of island imagery in the novel, and illustrate some of these in any way you think appropriate. (Also Art.)

Student Involvement Activities

1. Go to a beach when everyone has left after a busy

day, or to a special-event site after the event is over, and collect personal items people have left behind: a child's pail or shovel, for example, or a sandal, or a forgotten pair of sunglasses. What kinds of artifacts are most often left behind? You could do this as a scavenger hunt.

2. Learn how to tap dance, and demonstrate your new skill to the class. Teach a classmate how to do this type of dancing.
3. Visit an island on- and off-season. How are the two seasons different on the island?
4. Which readers are the author's intended audience — children? Young adults? Adults? All ages? Discuss this question with classmates.
5. Teach a baby to play patty-cake, or teach a child to play rock, paper, scissors.
6. Have a class poetry recital day. Each student memorizes a poem and recites it to the class, or recites it in a small group.
7. Critics have called *Baby* a "deeply felt story." Describe your feelings as you read the novel.
8. With classmates, discuss the ways in which barriers that block communication between young people and their parents can grow, and ways to break down these barriers.

Alternate Assessment

1. Describe the ways in which Sophie affects each of the members of Larkin's family during her stay with them.
2. Explain the ways in which the novel is about the power of words.
3. Describe the special aspects of life on an island as illustrated in the novel.
4. Write a scene in which Sophie's mother is charged with a criminal offense for abandoning her daughter. Reflecting each character's personality, have as many of the island inhabitants as possible give reasons why Sophie's mother should or should not be prosecuted for abandoning her baby.

Selected Other Works by Patricia MacLachlan

The Sick Day (1979)
Arthur, for the Very First Time (1980)
Moon, Stars, Frogs, and Friends (1980)
Through Grandpa's Eyes (1980)
Cassie Binigar (1982)
Mama One, Mama Two (1982)
Tomorrow's Wizard (1982)

Seven Kisses in a Row (1983)
Unclaimed Treasures (1984)
Sarah, Plain and Tall (1985)
The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt (1988)
Three Names (1991)
Journey (1991)
All the Places to Love (1994)
Skylark (1994) (a sequel to *Sarah, Plain and Tall*)
What You Know First (1995)

Related Reading

C.S. Adler, *One Sister Too Many*
 Patricia Calvert, *The Stone Pony*
 Vera Cleaver, *Belle Pruit*
 —, *Sugar Blue*
 Michael Dorris, *Morning Girl*
 Sarah Ellis, *A Family Project*
 Constance C. Green, *Beat the Turtle Drum*
 Patricia Hermes, *Take Care of My Girl*
 —, *A Place for Jeremy*
 Jean Little, *Mama 's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird*
 Michael Morpurgo, *Why the Whales Came*.
 Ruth Yaffe Radin, *Tac 's Island and Tac Turn*
 Stephen Roos, *And the Winner Is*
 Laura C. Stevenson, *Happily After All*

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The Bulletin of the Center for Children 's Books, September 1993, p. 17.
 Chevalier, Tracy, ed. *Twentieth-Century Children c Writers*, 3d. ed. Chicago/London: St. James Press, 1989.
Contemporary Authors, Vol. 136. Detroit: Gale, 1992.
 Holtze, Sally Holmes, ed. *Sixth Book of Junior Authors and illustrators*. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1989.
The Horn Book Magazine, January/February 1986, pp. 19-26; July/August 1986, pp. 407-19; November/December 1989, pp. 736-45; November/December 1993, p. 746.
New York limes Book Review, November 14, 1993, p. 34.
Publishers Weekly, August 16, 1993, p. 104.
School Library Journal, November 1993, p. 109.
Something About the Author, Vol. 62. Detroit: Gale, 1990.
VOYA, October 1993, pp. 216-17.

Vocabulary Test

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- _____ 1. Lab wouldn't miss my father's wild and breathless "I Got Rhythm" that finished with a flourish, hands stretched out as if playing to a large audience.
- _____ 2. Mama smiled wistfully.
- _____ 3. We passed parents walking with children, babies in backpacks, dogs loping nose to the ground behind them.
- _____ 4. My father's face was dark and still and bewildered.
- _____ 5. The baby, legs twisted in a blanket, fell hard on the driveway and began to wail.
- _____ 6. My father's voice wavered as he read.
- _____ 7. Sophie lunged toward Mama then, nearly falling out of Byrd's arms.
- _____ 8. From then on Sophie walked, sometimes tottering so that our hands went out to protect her.
- _____ 9. "Sophie is not a substitute," Papa said slowly.
- _____ 10. "In this room, in these books, there is the power of a hundred hurricanes. Wondrous words."
- _____ 11. "That's because Rebel is anguished," said Portia. "All anguished people read poetry."
- _____ 12. "There's redundancy there." "Yes, most assuredly there is."
- _____ 13. "My mother thinks germs cannot penetrate wool."
- _____ 14. Mrs. Baldelli did, however, have "flawed ideas" — Lab's words — about electricity.
- _____ 15. "It is called Dirge Without Music."
- _____ 16. "Totally overcome. I know that's redundant."
- _____ 18. "Everyone here has been Sophie's family since you left her," Byrd said. Julia winced.
- _____ 19. "This is your mother's robust time of year," said Papa grumpily.
- _____ 20. The sun rose and came in through the window and over us. Outside the island glistened.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| a. puzzled | k. pained |
| b. slide the feet | l. cry |
| c. get through | m. swaying |
| d. running | n. shook |
| e. definitely | o. sadly |
| f. vigorous | p. plunged |
| g. stand-in | q. bold gesture |
| h. flinched | r. mistaken |
| i. sad hymn | s. amazing |
| j. too much | t. sparkled |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. You will use each name only once.

- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| a. Larkin | f. Sophie |
| b. Papa | g. Ms. Minifred |
| c. Mama | h. Rebel |
| d. Byrd | i. Mrs. Baldelli |
| e. Lab | j. William |

- _____ 1. She was seventy years old with white hair piled on her head, and rows of neck wrinkles like necklaces.
- _____ 2. She liked wondrous words. She loved the beginnings of books, and the ends.
- _____ 3. Began school each year with a plaid dress.
- _____ 4. She was beautiful and tall with long black hair, and she had come to the island fifteen years ago.
- _____ 5. She didn't like the mittens; she didn't like the snowsuit; she didn't like snow. She did like her red rubber boots.
- _____ 6. All day long he was quiet and stubborn, the editor of the island newspaper. But in the evenings he danced.
- _____ 7. He had come to the island with his Harley-Davidson motorcycle when he was eighteen and had never left.
- _____ 8. He liked the high places, the dangerous edges of the island. He wasn't afraid of anything.
- _____ 9. Covered with flecks and smears of paint; a walking landscape.
- _____ 10. Lies beneath a tiny stone engraved "Baby."

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. Rebel has a tattoo on his arm with the words _____
2. William is related to Larkin; he is Larkin's _____
3. The novel is set on/in a(n) _____
4. The author of the poem "Dirge Without Music" is _____
5. Larkin's mother earns money working as a(n) _____
6. When she leaves and when she comes back, Sophie travels by _____
7. Papa teaches Sophie the hand moves for the game of rock, _____
8. Rebel is the school's _____
9. Sophie leaves Larkin's family wearing Byrd's _____ necklace.
10. The poem Ms. Minifred read to the class says, "I am not _____ to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground."
11. At first, Larkin thinks poetry is just _____
12. Julia is the mother of _____
13. Papa likes to dance to the song "Me and My _____"
14. Fortunato is the name of the island _____
15. Lab's mother has very odd ideas about _____

Part III: True/False (20 points)

In the spaces provided, write T if the statement is completely true, or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Sophie is Larkin's baby sister.
- _____ 2. Sophie is about one year old when she first joins Larkin's family.

- ___ 3. Lab's parents run an inn.
- ___ 4. Lab loves to begin sentences with the word "So."
- ___ 5. Larkin thinks her parents talk too much about the dead baby.
- ___ 6. Ms. Minifred and Rebel are in love with each other.
- ___ 7. Larkin and Byrd do not get along together very well.
- ___ 8. Sophie's memories of her stay with Larkin's family are frightening.
- ___ 9. Papa teaches Sophie the names for different types of clouds.
- ___ 10. Larkin is never able to dance, to do the soft shoe, like Papa.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any three to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

- 1. How does Sophie come to stay with Larkin's family? When and why does she leave?
- 2. Describe Larkin's relationship with Lab.
- 3. How does Ms. Minifred help Larkin deal with her grief?
- 4. How do Larkin's mother and father express their feelings in ways other than through words?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. Use each name only once.

- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| a. Larkin | f. Sophie |
| b. Papa | g. Ms. Minifred |
| c. Mama | h. Rebel |
| d. Byrd | i. Mrs. Baldelli |
| e. Lab | j. Julia |

- ____ 1. "Don't. Don't love her."
 ____ 2. "You cannot walk away and leave this behind as if it never happened. Like the baby."
 ____ 3. "Don't stand near the sockets, sweet girl."
 ____ 4. "So hello, Sophie."
 ____ 5. "In this room, in these books, there is the power of a hundred hurricanes. Wondrous words."
 ____ 6. "I think of you and miss you. Things are better."
 ____ 7. "I haven't been a good mother to you."
 ____ 8. "Sometimes I remember things and I don't know what they mean."
 ____ 9. "I never saw the baby. Not once. And he doesn't have a name."
 ____ 10. "Class is over. Go home."

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. What is Ms. Minifred's first name? _____
 2. Who is the author of this novel? _____
 3. Who is Larkin's brother? _____
 4. What does Larkin's father do for a living? _____
 5. What does Larkin's father do on the tabletop each evening before dinner? _____
 6. What kind of business do Mr. and Mrs. Baldelli run? _____
 7. What type of vehicle does Rebel drive? _____
 8. What is Larkin's mother's first name? _____
 9. What kind of literature does Ms. Minifred teach that helps Larkin a lot? _____
 10. During what season of the year does Sophie arrive? _____
 11. What do Griffey and his boys contribute to the going-away festivities when the last summer ferry leaves the island?

 12. Which of the novel's characters has a mother named Marvella? _____
 13. What is Ms. Minifred's job at the school? _____
 14. What does Rebel have/wear on his arm? _____
 15. What relation is Byrd to Larkin? _____

Part III: True/False (20 points)

In the spaces provided, write T if the statement is completely true, or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- ____ 1. No one in Larkin's family really expects Sophie's mother to come back for Sophie.
 ____ 2. Larkin's father and mother try to adopt Sophie.
 ____ 3. Larkin's mother finally paints a picture of her lost baby.
 ____ 4. Larkin's father thinks it is a good idea to keep Sophie when the baby first arrives.
 ____ 5. Sophie's mother sends letters to the baby.
 ____ 6. Ms. Minifred has had a brother named William.
 ____ 7. Ten years later, Sophie has vague memories of her stay with Larkin's family.
 ____ 8. Larkin finds that her feelings are expressed in a poem.

- ___ 9. Lab is Larkin's cousin.
___ 10. Sophie returns to the island when she is eighteen years old.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any three to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. What role does Byrd play in the novel?
2. What do Larkin and her family learn about grief?
3. Explain the novel's title.
4. How do we know, from early on in the book, that Sophie will leave Larkin's family while she is still very young?

Answer Key**VOCABULARY TEST**

1. q	6. n	11. K	16. j
2. o	7. p	12. e	17. b
3. d	8. m	13. c	18. h
4. a	9. g	14. r	19. f
5. 1	10. s	15. l	20. t

COMPREHENSION TEST A**Part I: Matching (20 points)**

1. d	6. b
2. g	7. h
3. a	8. e
4. i	9. c
5. f	10. j

Part II: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Wild Eunice | 9. ruby |
| 2. brother | 10. resigned |
| 3. island | 11. words |
| 4. (Edna St. Vincent) Millay | 12. Sophie |
| 5. artist | 13. Shadow |
| 6. ferry | 14. doctor |
| 7. paper, scissors | 15. electricity (or germs) |
| 8. janitor | |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary somewhat. Samples follow.

- Sophie's mother, Julia, leaves the baby with Larkin's family because Sophie's father needs an operation, and caring for him afterward will take all of Julia's time. Julia has selected Larkin's family after observing them during the summer. Sophie leaves when Julia comes to get her once Sophie's father is better.
- Larkin and Lab are best friends. Lab is protective of Larkin, which Larkin appreciates.
- Ms. Minifred reads the Millay poem "Dirge Without Music" in class, which gives words to Larkin's feelings about the death of her baby brother and enables Larkin to speak to her mother about her feelings.
- Papa tap dances each evening, and Mama paints.

COMPREHENSION TEST B**Part I: Matching (20 points)**

1. b	6. j
2. d	7. c
3. i	8. f
4. e	9. a
5. g	10. h

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Eunice | 9. poetry |
| 2. Patricia MacLachlan | 10. summer |
| 3. William | 11. music |
| 4. newspaper editor | 12. Lalo |
| 5. tap dance | 13. librarian |
| 6. inn | 14. tattoo |
| 7. motorcycle | 15. grandmother |
| 8. Lily | |

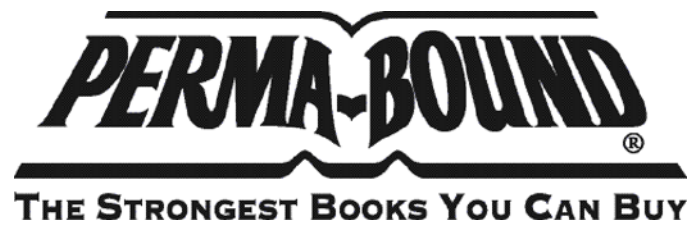
Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. F | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (30 Points)

Answers will vary somewhat. Samples follow.

- Byrd is Larkin's confidante, the only adult in the household to whom Larkin can talk about her feelings and express her anger about her parents' silence. Byrd identifies what is not being said by Larkin's parents, and she ultimately forces Mama and Papa to discuss Sophie's departure and baby William's death.
- They learn that grief unexpressed is grief unresolved, that grief must be acknowledged; if suppressed, it isn't accepted or resolved. Acceptance, however, does not have to mean resignation to the beloved's death.
- "Baby" refers both to baby William, whose death has left the family in limbo with relationships asunder, and to baby Sophie, whose advent helps the family come to terms with baby William's death.
- Sophie's memories of her time with Larkin's family, which appear on occasional pages, are fragmentary and fleeting, the memories of a very young child. We are not given any memories that would be of an older Sophie.



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