GENTLEHANDS

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

M. E. KERR

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARVIN TRAVER

SYNOPSIS

Buddy meets Skye Pennington at the Sweet Mouth Soda Shoppe where he works. She is pretty, sophisticated, and very rich. Buddy is from a working class family.

Buddy is overwhelmed by the Pennington Estate, Beauregard. It's like something from a movie.

To impress Skye, Buddy takes her to meet his rich eccentric German-born grandfather. This is the grandfather Buddy has only met once before. His mother has always talked against this grandfather who let her mother go to America when she was six months old. He never tried to contact them. The grandparents later divorced.

Buddy is prepared to not like the grandfather. Quite the opposite occurs. Skye loves Grandpa. Buddy is impressed with his wit, charm, and timely advice.

Buddy's parents feel that the relationship with Skye can't last. "He's over his head," is the term his parents use.

At Beauregard Buddy meets all kinds of people. People he never knew before like writers, dancers, and famous businessmen. He relies more and more on his grandfather for advice. Grandpa says of beautiful girls, "Beauty can pierce you like a pain."

One night Buddy has too much wine. Grandpa has to call his parents to say Buddy is staying the night. He says, "Something he ate made him sick." It is the first time the parents know that he's going to see his grandfather.

Buddy's father in particular is upset. He says, "Maybe you should go live with your grandfather, you like it there so much." Buddy moves out.

Things go well with Skye. She finds Buddy so different from her rich friends; friends who often make jokes about Jewish people. Skye once makes a joke about Jews in front of Mr. DeLucca, a friend of the family. She thinks he is Italian. He recites a poem called *Gentlehands.* It is a moving poem written by Mr. DeLucca's fifteen year old cousin. She wrote it at Auschwitz Concentration Camp. It is about a notorious Nazi murderer called Gentlehands.

Life goes on with Grandpa. He knows opera and art very well. He has a great love for animals. He can't stand to see them hurt. He helps Buddy start to think about his future.

One night Buddy sees someone watching Grandpa's house through binoculars. It is Mr. DeLucca. He is a newspaper reporter and a Nazi hunter. He thinks he has found Gentlehands—it's Grandpa!

The local paper headines, "Motauk Man Accused of Being Nazi." Buddy's parents believe the story. They force him to move back home. His mother prays that her name isn't linked to her father's.

Buddy stands by his grandfather, pointing out how kind he is. He just happened to live in Germany, thus he was part of the war. Buddy goes back to live with Grandpa. A series of ugly incidents have Grandpa sending Buddy back home. He asks Buddy to call a number and say "The package from Trenker is on its way."

As more evidence comes to light Buddy has to face the fact. His charming Grandfather really is Gentlehands. Buddy tells Mr. DeLucca about the mailed package. This nets another big Nazi. Grandpa rented a small plane and got away.

The summer draws to an end and Skye is off to college. Buddy knows their relationship is over. He pays one last visit to Grandpa's house. Grandpa had sent a letter saying to take anything you want. Buddy takes nothing. He is trying to understand the ironies of life; when things aren't at all what they seem to be.

SETTING

Montauk and Seaville Long Island, the beautiful estate called Beauregard where Skye lives. Also, the ocean front mansion that is home to Buddy's grandfather.

CHARACTERS

Buddy—a working class town boy
Skye Pennington—a rich young female summer resident
Inge—Buddy's mother
Billy—Buddy's father in the police force
Streaker—Buddy's five year old brother
Mrs. Schneider—a kind old lady
Frank Trenker—Buddy's grandfather
Mr. DeLucca—a newspaper reporter and Nazi hunter
Ollie—Buddy's best friend
Bachoo—Skye's mother's spiritualist
Mignon—Grandpa's dog
Kick Richards—owns the shop where Buddy works
Ginny Townsend—Kick's wife
Ogden Pennington—Skye's father
Ogden, Jr.—Skye's brother
Mrs. Pennington—Skye's mother
Conrad Spreckles—old friend of Skye's
Mr. Verner—Grandpa's old friend
Carla—woman Grandpa had loved

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

M. E. Kerr was born in Auburn, N.Y., attended the University of Missouri and now lives in East Hampton, New

© 1987 by PERMA-BOUND

York. She is the author of six other novels for young people—*Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!; If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?; The Son of Someone Famous; Is That You, Miss Blue?; Love Is A Missing Person; I'll Love You When You're More Like Me;* and *Gentlehands* which is published by Bantam.

CRITIC'S CORNER

"Kerr at her provocative best."

School Library Journal

"Kerr's earlier novels, splendid as they are, seem like a prelude to this story. It's a marvel of understated, diamond insights, irony and compassion."

Publishers Weekly

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To study the question of class in America. Is there a big difference between classes in our democracy?
2. Contrast the difference between how Buddy and his parents view the Grandfather.
3. To discuss what it means to be anti-semetic. What signs of it did students find in the story?
4. To trace the development of Buddy's relationship with his Grandfather from the first time he took Skye to visit until the bitter end.
5. To analyze Skye, what makes her go after Buddy? Why does she smoke pot? Is she herself anti-semetic?
6. To help students to understand that the Holocaust can never be forgotten.
7. To be able to point out the irony of this story.

MEANING STUDY

Below are words that have particular importance in this book. Explain the meaning each has in this story.

1. clique
   (a small group of people only friendly with each other)
2. townie
   (the people who live all year on Long Island)
3. maitre d'
   (the head waiter at an expensive restaurant)
4. aria
   (song in an opera)
5. gozlin
   (a yiddish word meaning "a swindle")
6. sacrosanct
   (very sacred, very holy)
7. omens
   (a bad sign)
8. rapport
   (to feel comfortable with a person you have just met)
9. nepotism
   (the giving of a job because you are related)
10. dowdy
    (someone who doesn't dress in an up-to-date style)
11. perpetrator
    (the person believed to be of blame for a crime)
12. libel
    (to knowingly tell a lie about someone)
13. unfathomable
    (unbelievable; something you can't imagine)

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.

1. What are four things that clue you into Skye's ultra rich lifestyle?
   (Skye buys Buddy a very expensive cashmere sweater. She drives a Jensen (one of six family cars). There are gold framed pictures of her in the pool house taken all over the world. She goes to parties at the Hadefield Club (members only).
2. Why do you think Buddy's father punched him after dinner in the backyard?
   (His father felt like Buddy was putting him down. He kept going on and on about all the wonderful things the Penningtons had. It made his father feel inferior and angry.)
3. Compare how the Grandfather and the parents would handle the same problem with Buddy.
   (The parents would yell and tell Buddy not to do something. There was no discussion. The Grandfather would talk it over and give advice, "With every opportunity goes a responsibility.")
4. Do some research. Go to the library and find out the name of at least one famous Nazi hunter. Do a report on how and why he/she does this type of work.
5. Read the poem *Gentlehands* on page 55. Write a detailed explanation of what it means.
   (Answers will vary)
6. Some people say "Let bygones be bygones." What do they mean? Why isn't it possible to do this with Buddy's Grandfather?
   ("Let bygones be bygones" means let's not hold a grudge. After a fight or disagreement let's let it pass

and go on with our lives. In the case of Frank Trenker his crime was so notorious and cruel we can't let it pass. Mankind must deal with these people so that nothing like this can ever happen again.)

7. Where does this story take place? What makes the location special?
   (The story takes place in the town of Seaville and Montauk Long Island, New York. The location is special because it has been a summer home for the ultra rich of New York for many years. This creates a contrast with the regular year round people. They feel like lower class people in the summer.)

8. What is the greatest irony in this story?
   (The greatest irony is a grandfather who is so cultured, so extraordinary, that he commands respect on sight. A man who loves all animals. A man who can't stand cruelty to animals, yet he was a terrible Nazi murderer. He thought nothing of pointing out who (and there were thousands) should be killed each *day. It truly boggles your mind.)*

9. Try your hand at poetry. Write a poem that expresses Buddy's confused feelings at the end of the story.
   (Answers will vary)

10. How do these minor characters, Ollie, Streaker, and Mr. Verner, have major importance in the story?
    (Ollie—*Buddy's best friend. You could see Buddy's changing view of life in the changed way he treated Ollie.*
    Streaker—*Buddy's younger brother. Buddy's love/hate relationship came to a head after he met Skye.*
    Mr. Verner—*A seemingly harmless old man who collects stamps. His stamp collecting tipped Buddy off that he was a former high ranking Nazi.)*

COMPREHENSION GUIDE

Literal—Questions 1, 7
Interpretive—Questions 3, 5, 8, 10
Critical—Questions 2, 6
Creative—Question 9
Research—Question 4

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. See if there is a Holocaust Center or Memorial in your area. Go as a small group and see and hear what the director has to tell you.

2. Keep Skye's daily diary from May 30th to Labor Day. Check back in the book for key events—date—meetings with Grandpa—parties with friends. Let the diary reveal her true feelings and thoughts.

3. Have different members of the cast play Skye's friends at a pool party. Have them ad-lib conversations and show how they view life from the upper class advantage.

4. Write a letter from Mr. DeLucca to Buddy. Have him explain how he tracked down Gentlehands and why he never mentioned Gentlehands' daughter, who lives nearby.

5. Write a paper (teacher determines length). Have it tell how Grandpa got away. Where did he go? How would he start over again? Has the chase ended?

GENTLEHANDS

VOCABULARY MATCH

Read each definition in Column I and match it to the correct Vocabulary Word in Column II.

COLUMN I	COLUMN II
_____ 1. To be intoxicated while driving.	A. clique
_____ 2. To knowingly tell a lie about someone.	B. townie
_____ 3. To have very blond hair.	C. maitre d'
_____ 4. The people who lived all year on Long Island.	D. aria
_____ 5. To feel comfortable with a person you have just met.	E. gozlin
_____ 6. To take something away.	F. sacrosanct
_____ 7. A bad sign.	G. omens
_____ 8. The giving of a job because you are related.	H. rapport
_____ 9. Someone who doesn't dress in style.	I nepotism
_____ 10. A small group of people who aren't friendly to others.	J. dowdy
_____ 11. A yiddish word meaning "a swindler."	K. perpetrator
_____ 12. The person believed to blame for a crime.	L. libel
_____ 13. Lacking in vigor or strength.	M. unfathomable
_____ 14. The head waiter at an expensive restaurant.	N. towhead
_____ 15. A wide opening.	O. anemic
_____ 16. Irritating, causing trouble.	P. provocative
_____ 17. Person who interprets things from spiritual point of view.	Q. confiscate
_____ 18. Sung in an opera.	R. spiritualist
_____ 19. Unbelievable, something you can't imagine.	S. gaping
_____ 20. Very sacred, very holy.	T. DWI

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: True or False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with **T** if it is true or **F** if any part of it is false.

_____ 1. Buddy lives in Seaville, New York.

_____ 2. Mignon was named after a work of art.

_____ 3. Skye took Buddy to the Hadefield Club.

_____ 4. Buddy's dad hated pot smokers.

_____ 5. Grandpa had loved a lady named Carrie.

_____ 6. Streaker hated to go clamming.

_____ 7. Grandpa said one rose is better than a bouquet.

_____ 8. Grandpa had talked to Mr. DeLucca.

_____ 9. Skye was afraid to see Grandpa after the news story.

_____ 10. Buddy left the sweater from Skye behind.

Part II: Sequence (10 points)

The five events listed below are scrambled. In the space preceding the numbers, write the letters of the events in the order in which they occurred.

_____1. (A) Buddy and Skye visit Grandpa for the first time.

_____2. (B) Grandpa says, "Stop calling yourself Buddy."

_____3. (C) Grandpa sends Buddy back home.

_____4. (D) Buddy spends $150 on new clothes.

_____5. (E) Grandpa talks about his divorce.

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank.

_____ 1. Buddy's mother said his grandfather was (a) a slob (b) an animal lover (c) dangerous (d) a snob.

_____ 2. Buddy said his grandfather looked like (a) Boris Karloff (b) Cary Grant (c) Bob Hope (d) Fred Allen.

_____ 3. The first question Mrs. Pennington asked Buddy was (a) Where does your father work? (b) What is your sign? (c) Do you like animals? (d) How about a swim?

_____ 4. The Pennington's money came from (a) banking (b) stock market (c) oil (d) publishing.

_____ 5. Grandpa taught Buddy how to (a) drive (b) sing opera (c) meet girls (d) pour wine.

_____ 6. The man watching Grandpa's house with binoculars drove a (a) Jensen (b) Rolls (c) Jeep (d) Fiat.

_____ 7. Kick (Buddy's boss) had been (a) an actor (b) a dancer (c) a banker (d) a reporter.

_____ 8. Grandpa lived in (a) Manhattan (b) Seaville (c) Montauk (d) Bryn Maws.

_____ 9. Streaker was how old (a) 4 (b) 6 (c) 5 (d) 7.

_____10. The Nazi Renner was really (a) Trenker (b) Verner (c) Mignon (d) Schneider.

GENTLEHANDS

Part IV: Character Match (20 points)

Place the letter of the character or place in Column II in front of the number it matches in Column I.

COLUMN I	COLUMN II
_____ 1. A baby Raccoon	A. Buddy
_____ 2. A town boy	B. Inge
_____ 3. Buddy's boss	C. Graham Crackers
_____ 4. A Nazi	D. Streaker
_____ 5. Buddy's mother	E. Bachoo
_____ 6. Buddy's best friend	F. Kick Richards
_____ 7. A spiritualist	G. Carla
_____ 8. Lived in Cuba	H. Mr. DeLucca
_____ 9. A newspaper man	I. Ollie
_____10. A five year old	J. Mr. Verner

Part V: Essay Questions (10 points each = 30 points)

1. Compare how the grandfather and the parents would handle the same problem with Buddy.

2. What is the greatest irony in this story?

3. Where does this story take place and what makes the location special?

GENTLEHANDS

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: True or False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with **T** if it is true or **F** if it is false.

_____ 1. Skye's father let her drive his jeep.

_____ 2. Mrs. Pennington was a vegetarian.

_____ 3. Buddy's dad punched him because he lied.

_____ 4. Mr. DeLucca wrote the poem *Gentlehands.*

_____ 5. Skye was going to school at Bryn Maws.

_____ 6. Grandpa argued with his neighbor about animal traps.

_____ 7. Buddy wanted to become a doctor.

_____ 8. Skye's family told her to visit Grandpa anytime.

_____ 9. Carla had been killed in a house fire.

_____10. Grandpa got a call saying they would kill his dog.

Part II: Sequence (10 points)

The five events listed below are scrambled. In the space preceding the numbers, write the letters of the events in the order in which they occurred.

_____1. (A) Buddy moves in with Grandpa.

_____2. (B) Buddy is grounded for two weeks.

_____3. (C) Grandpa asks Buddy what he plans to become.

_____4. (D) We find out Mr. DeLucca is Jewish.

_____5. (E) Buddy's mother worries about a scandal.

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank.

_____ 1. Mr. DeLucca said Buddy was a (a) loser (b) townie (c) kid (d) pot-head.

_____ 2. Buddy's boss called him a "gozlin." This means (a) a cheat (b) a liar (c) a ladies' man (d) a swindler.

_____ 3. Skye lived at (a) Montauk (b) Seaville (c) Beauregard (d) Fire Island.

_____ 4. Buddy's mother was (a) German (b) American (c) Irish (d) French.

_____ 5. Grandpa said he did not return to his homeland because (a) he was wanted (b) he hated his country (c) he made more money in America (d) of communism.

_____ 6. Skye's dad thought Buddy was too (a) poor (b) outspoken (c) young (d) quiet.

_____ 7. Grandpa had Buddy do this for him: (a) send a package (b) make a phone call (c) pick up a package (d) drive him to the airport.

_____ 8. Skye and Buddy's mothers were alike in one way; they both liked (a) new clothes (b) big cars (c) animals (d) neatness.

_____ 9. Buddy's dad is a (a) policeman (b) fireman (c) reporter (d) ambulance driver.

_____10. When Buddy made his last visit to Grandpa's house he found it (a) empty (b) up for sale (c) trashed (d) peaceful.

GENTLEHANDS

Part IV: Character Match (20 points)

Place the letter of the character or place from Column II in front of the number from Column I which matches.

COLUMN I	COLUMN II
_____ 1. Grandpa's dog	A. Billy
_____ 2. Rich and beautiful	B. Skye
_____ 3. Skye's father	C. Ginny Townsend
_____ 4. A friend of Skye's	D. Mignon
_____ 5. Spent the summer in Europe	E. Frank Trenker
_____ 6. A kind old lady	F. Conrad Spreckles
_____ 7. Buddy's dad	G. Ogden, Jr.
_____ 8. A Nazi war criminal	H. Mrs. Schneider
_____ 9. Kick's wife	I. Ogden Pennington
_____ 10. Lived in Cuba	J. Carla

Part V: Essay Questions (10 points each = 30 points)

1. What are four things that clue you into Skye's ultra rich lifestyle?

2. Some people say "Let bygones be bygones." What do they mean? Why isn't it possible to do this with Buddy's grandfather?

3. How do these minor characters (Ollie, Streaker, and Mr. Verner) have major importance in this story?

GENTLEHANDS

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

1. T	6. Q	11. E	16. P
2. L	7. G	12. K	17. R
3. N	8. I	13. O	18. D
4. B	9. J	14. C	19. M
5. H	10. A	15. S	20. F

COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: True or False (20 points)

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

Part II: Sequence (10 points)

1. D
2. A
3. E
4. B
5. C

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. D	6. D
2. A	7. A
3. B	8. C
4. C	9. C
5. D	10. B

Part IV: Character Match (20 points)

1. C	6. I
2. A	7. E
3. F	8. F
4. J	9. H
5. B	10. D

Part V: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. See Comprehension Question #3 in Study Guide.
2. See Comprehension Question #8 in Study Guide.
3. See Comprehension Question #7 in Study Guide.

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: True or False (20 points)

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

Part II: Sequence (10 points)

1. B
2. D
3. A
4. C
5. E

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. B	6. C
2. D	7. B
3. C	8. D
4. A	9. A
5. D	10. C

Part IV: Character Match (20 points)

1. D	6. H
2. B	7. A
3. I	8. E
4. F	9. C
5. G	10. J

Part V: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. See Comprehension Question #1 in Study Guide.
2. See Comprehension Question #6 in Study Guide.
3. See Comprehension Question #10 in Study Guide.

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING NOTES

PERMA-BOUND®

A DIVISION OF HERTZBERG NEW METHOD, INC.

PERMA-BOUND • VANDALIA ROAD • JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS 62650

Call toll free 1-800-637-6581