

LISA, BRIGHT AND DARK

JOHN NEUFELD

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

SYNOPSIS

Sixteen-year-old attractive and intelligent Lisa Shilling is in the early stages of insanity. Her friend Mary Nell Fickett begins to worry. To her parents, Lisa appears normal, but during a visit from Mary Nell (M.N.) Lisa requests psychiatric help as the family eats dinner. Mrs. Shilling, who is more concerned with social appearances, thinks the idea is ridiculous. M.N., however, follows Lisa to her room and witnesses bizarre behavior. She sees Lisa rock back and forth on all fours, butting her head against the headboard of the bed.

All but the first chapter is told through Betsy Goodman. She relates that Lisa's behavior becomes more public at a first anniversary celebration of her relationship with Brian Morris, student council president. Lisa feels that people are staring at her and withdraws to a dark corner to be alone. M.N. passes off her peculiarities as "that time." Later episodes prove something far more serious: Lisa is losing her sanity.

Lisa reveals her unpredictable behavior through sparkling conversation and bright dress on good days, and moody withdrawal and dark clothes and makeup on bad days. A climactic event proves to M.N. and Betsy that Lisa needs immediate attention. After Betsy arrives at social science class and crams for a test, the teacher sends her to find Lisa and M.N., who are tardy for class. Betsy locates M.N.—in Mr. Milne's room handing tissues to Lisa, who sits under the teacher's desk. She is senselessly puncturing her wrist with a pin and wiping away drops of blood.

M.N. and Betsy discover a truth about adults that dismays them—Lisa's parents, teachers, and counselor Mr. Bernstein, are slow to grasp the danger signals of Lisa's mental deterioration. The Shillings respond to Lisa's abnormal behavior by dispatching her—alone—to a rest home in Florida for six weeks. There, among the old people at the facility, Lisa receives no psychiatric care and spends her days sitting on the dock gazing at her reflection in the water. She returns home ostensibly rested and fit. To her schoolmates and teachers, however, Lisa is not back to normal.

Mary Nell contacts Mrs. Shilling, but receives a rebuff. Betsy likewise strikes out after conferring with Mr. Bernstein, whose efficacy she doubts. The girls draw Elizabeth Frazer, Lisa's confidante, into group therapy sessions so that they can help Lisa back to sanity. M.N., whose father is a minister, immerses herself in his psychology books and becomes an expert on psychoanalytic jargon. Yet, it is Betsy who moves closer to

the source of Lisa's pain. Elizabeth points out that Betsy is less judgmental of Lisa and therefore more effective as a counselor.

Reverend Fickett joins with Mr. Milne and visits the Shilling house to impress on the parents the state of affairs at school. Mr. Shilling, a busy man, declares that Lisa may be spoiled, but she does not need psychiatric care. The girls, undaunted in their attempts to help Lisa, continue therapy sessions that call on the patient to explain her dreams. Lisa offers a significant clue to her mental state when she describes the voices that lecture her inside her head.

At a hamburger supper at the Frazer house, Lisa suddenly recedes into a deranged state and shoves Elizabeth into a bed of hot coals. M.N. and Betsy pull Lisa away, Betsy covering Lisa's eyes with her hands. Luckily, Elizabeth is only slightly injured. Strangely, of the three teenage therapists, Elizabeth seems to understand Lisa's mental disturbances more than the others. Betsy is suspicious of Elizabeth's deeper knowledge of madness.

During a visit to the Goodman house, Lisa makes a strong plea for help by throwing herself through a plate-glass window in front of Mr. Goodman. When he rushes to her aid, Lisa thanks him before lapsing into unconsciousness. Betsy summons an emergency medical team and Lisa's mother. Mrs. Shilling accuses M.N. of imagining the whole thing. Elizabeth confronts Mrs. Shilling with the truth about Lisa's madness. In retaliation, Mrs. Shilling slaps Elizabeth. Elizabeth returns the slap. Mrs. Shilling orders the girls to stay away from Lisa.

In the ensuing days, Elizabeth fails to appear at school. One morning, Brian announces that Lisa has gone home from the hospital. When Elizabeth returns to school, she invites the girls to her house, where they meet Dr. Neil Donovan, her former psychiatrist. At Mr. Frazer's expense, the analyst questions Lisa's teachers and counselor. In the meantime, Lisa makes an even more pointed cry for help by swallowing barbituates and lying down on the living room sofa. Her family rescues her from suicide. Dr. Donovan, through Mr. Goodman's intervention, gets permission from Dr. Brody to visit Lisa. Their encounter brings a flood of tears to Lisa's eyes.

Dr. Donovan plans to take Lisa to his clinic in upstate New York. With luck, she may return to school by Christmas. Elizabeth's unselfish act reveals her own secret—that she, too, suffered a mental problem and found help through Dr. Donovan's care. As summer nears, the girls make their plans. Only Betsy is left behind in New York. She looks forward to opportunities of turning her Joanne Woodward smile and Paula Prentiss voice on Brian.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Arthur Neufeld (1938-), who also publishes under the pseudonym Joan Lea, is a Chicago native who grew up in Des Moines. He was educated at Yale and is currently living in Los Angeles. His mother, a former English teacher, modeled good reading habits and surrounded her children with quality books. A late literary bloomer who admits that he did not read as a child, Neufeld developed into a binge reader of adult books at the age of twelve and preferred the works of Evelyn Waugh.

Following his graduation from Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, Neufeld lived for a while in London and enjoyed regular weekends in Paris. After a short stint in the army, he chose the legendary Maxwell Perkins, mentor of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, as a model and sought editing jobs, despite his obvious lack of experience. From writing ad copy for Harcourt Brace and World he moved to Franklin Watts, wrote failed television projects, and generally knocked about the literary environment before finding a niche for himself.

Neufeld has established a reputable career as staff member for Golden Press, reviewer, spokesman for young adult fiction, and writer of both adult and young adult novels and television screenplays. He devotes time to speaking before school and library groups and enjoys travel. For a short period in 1983, he took a job as English teacher at the St. Eugene School in Los Angeles, but departed quickly — taking with him an appreciation for the daily grind that classroom teachers face.

Neufeld began his career in 1968 with a winner—*Edgar Allan*. His second work, *Lisa, Bright and Dark* (1969), named an outstanding book of the year by the *New York Times Book Review*, was adapted for National Educational Television. Subsequent works include *Touching* (1970), *Sleep Two, Three, Four!* (1971), *For All the Wrong Reasons* (1973), *You Think I'd Go Around Making These Things Up?* (1973), *Freddy's Book* (1973), *Sunday Father* (1975), *Trading Up* (1975), *The Fun of It* (1977), *A Small Civil War* (1982), *Sharelle* (1983), and *Rolling the Stone* (1984). He has written two television scripts — "Death Sentence" and "You Lie So Deep, My Love."

CRITIC'S CORNER

Neufeld received the American Library Association notable book award for *Edgar Allan*. Critics laud the book for focusing on the issues of cross-racial adoption. John W. Connor, in his review of *Touching* for *English Journal* notes that adolescents can better understand themselves from having read the book.

The idea for *Lisa, Bright and Dark* evolved from a dinner engagement in New York with a psychiatrist who described a deeply troubled young patient. The novel, a best-seller for the publisher, remains a favorite among teen-aged audiences.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize the symptoms of mental illness
2. To explain the importance of friendship

3. To discuss the importance of parental support
4. To pinpoint the setting of the story
5. To research and explain psychological terminology
6. To analyze the point of view of Chapter 1
7. To locate and describe the climax of the story
8. To contrast emotional strengths and weakness in each character
9. To describe the role of school in the lives of the main characters

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To characterize the Shillings' relationship with Lisa
2. To contrast the other parents and their response to their children
3. To explain how Lisa demonstrates her need for help
4. To describe Dr. Donovan's efforts to rescue Lisa
5. To list ways in which the therapy group both harms and helps Lisa
6. To predict how Betsy's relationship with Brian will change
7. To describe how Elizabeth's role evolves and why she keeps her past a secret
8. To explain the significance of the title

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning each has in this novel. Chapter references are provided so that you can re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. If Mary Nell is the All-American Girl, and I nail down the All-American Schlepp spot, the role of Princess goes to Elizabeth Frazer. (2)
(Betsy, in characterizing her two classmates, sees Mary Nell as a fresh-faced beauty, Elizabeth Frazer as a girl-who-has-everything, and herself as a drag. In the opening paragraph of the same chapter, Betsy notes, "I'm not overconfident about things." She adds that she is not beautiful because she wears glasses to correct nearsightedness and because she is plain.)
2. Then M.N. took Brian and led him back to the study, explaining that maybe it was "that time" or something and that Lisa was probably just a little depressed. (3)
(M.N. uses the possibility of pre-menstrual syndrome, i. e. moodiness, fluid retention, and depression, as a means of explaining away Lisa's bizarre behavior at the celebration of her first anniversary as Brian's girl.)

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3. He reminds me of something I read about Franklin Roosevelt, I think it was. (4)

(Betsy characterizes Mr. Frazer's strong points in terms of what she had read about Franklin Roosevelt, popular president during World War II who was known for affability and a dazzling smile. One of Roosevelt's most endearing gestures to Americans during that unsettling era was a series of "Fireside Chats" broadcast over the radio.)

4. He's about as forceful as Prissy in *Gone with the Wind*. (6)

*(Betsy, the movie buff, compares the school counselor to the scatterbrained slave girl whom Scarlett O'Hara dispatches for Doctor Mead at a key point in the movie *Gone with the Wind*. Because Northern troops threaten Atlanta, Prissy is unable to bring the doctor and dawdles on her way home, leaving Scarlett to tend Melanie, who is in labor. The role of Prissy, played by Butterfly McQueen, is one of the more memorable moments of the movie.)*

5. You know, I feel sort of like Chicken Little. What the hell would have happened if the sky really had fallen in? (7)

(M.N. compares herself to a character in children's literature who spreads erroneous information that the sky is falling. In making this comparison, M.N. indicates her own lack of assurance that the girl's plan to help Lisa is the right thing to do.)

6. It was published in 1959. This edition, I mean. (9)

(Betsy makes an important point about research. In areas that change as rapidly as medical treatment, the edition of a reference work makes a great difference in terms of its applicability to current treatment. For example, many mental illnesses are thought of as imbalances in body chemistry and are treated with drugs rather than lobotomy, electroshock, or earlier and more brutal forms of therapy.)

7. It was about then that I remembered the saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Whoever said that first must have known M.N. was on the way. (13)

*(Betsy is quoting a famous line from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism*:*

*A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again."*

The point of the quatrain is that, on first learning about something, a person may feel the power of knowledge but lack the depth of mastery. A second drink at the spring of learning dispels earlier misconceptions and overconfidence.)

8. We laughed and giggled and rolled on the floor, pointing at M.N. and hooting, calling her "Freud" and "doctor" and "genius." (14)

(Dr. Sigmund Freud (1858-1939), a Viennese neurologist, made discoveries about physical illness by studying patients' mental troubles. By associating information from their dreams, free association, and hypnotic trances, he was able to formulate a theory of mental illness that dominated psychology for many years. His method of helping people was termed psychoanalysis and is often ridiculed by references to lying on a couch.)

9. I finally had to settle my own mind as best I could, and all I could think was that maybe that was plain and simple what madness was: doing just the opposite of what you wanted to do, and having no control over any of it. (17)

(Without employing any of M.N.'s research methods, Betsy, in pragmatic fashion, composes a workable definition of madness, a feat that scientists have attempted for centuries. Despite her immaturity and lack of experience, Betsy comes close to explaining what causes Lisa's illness.)

10. M.N. informed us that Lisa was in a precatatonic stage. (18)

(In contrast to Betsy, M.N. relies on jargon to describe Lisa's illness. M.N. scolds Betsy for the more casual phrasing: "This meant that she had become emotionless with neither the desire to live or speak normally. That all we could expect from here on in was silence, immobility, a zombie, in fact.)

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 novel.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe Lisa's home and parents.

(The Shilling household exemplifies a pretentious effort to impress others with pseudo-gentility and wealth. Using Betsy's word, the Shillings are "phonies." Mrs. Shilling, who rings "a little silver dinner bell for the maid," negates her daughter's request for psychiatric care in deference to her own wishes to keep up a proper front. Mr. Shilling, whom Betsy characterizes as "flashy," "tries too hard to be clever, too hard to be quick, too hard at everything except at being himself."

Betsy is particularly critical of the Shillings' outward appearance. Mr. Shilling is a clotheshorse — displaying his taste with ostentatious purchases from expensive stores, such as Neiman-Marcus and Brooks' Brothers. Mrs. Shilling, on the other hand, is less impressive because she chooses tight stretch-pants and sweaters which reveal "classic midriff bulge."

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In a single paragraph, Betsy sums up Mrs. Shilling's sins by comparing her parenting abilities with her decorating tastes. While ignoring Lisa and Tracy, Mrs. Shilling takes great pains to decorate an "enormously expensive house" with eye-catching, but uncomfortable furniture. She maintains two living rooms, one entirely in pink which is seldom used.)

2. How do the Frazers and Goodmans contrast with the Shillings?

(Betsy has a good eye for detail. She ends her scathing description of Mrs. Shilling's "Locust Valley Lockjaw" and immediately launches into the good points of the Frazers, who are "everything that Lisa's parents wish they were, and pretend to be." Mr. Frazer, a distinguished, quiet man, makes Betsy feel at home by carrying on a pleasant conversation. Mrs. Frazer, well-educated and ladylike, seems "truly interested in what we're doing.")

With characteristic acuity, Betsy realizes the value of her own family. Her father, an insurance salesman, seems content with his station in life. He and his daughter share a mutually satisfying relationship built on trust and acceptance. Likewise, Mrs. Goodman demonstrates her love and support for family and community with volunteer work. Yet she takes time for her children, giving them "her undivided attention and advice.")

3. Describe Lisa on a "bright" day.

(From Betsy's point of view, Lisa is "the kind of girl who couldn't have been called beautiful, really; everything just seemed to fit." The list of good traits covers the expected qualities of the girlfriend of the greatest catch at school: alert, humorous, smart, mature, sophisticated, stylish, shapely. In summary, she is "the kind of girl who is usually secretary of the student council, not because everyone who knows her likes her, but because it seems the office is hers by right.")

When the dark moods pass, Lisa returns to her ebullient self — answering class questions by "using words even M.N. hadn't yet discovered," and exemplifying a fresh-scrubbed wholesomeness "like an Ivory Soap baby at sixteen—simple, clean and unbelievably beautiful.")

4. Describe Lisa on a "dark" day.

(In her clouded moods, Lisa dresses in unappealing and unflattering dark colors and darkens her eyes with makeup. Unlike her usual outgoing self, she withdraws from the light and from friends. Her voice alters to a sharp, accusatory clip that cuts "her words off so that she sounded almost English." Her skin looks unhealthy and pale.

When girls visit Lisa's room on her dark days, they find "the shades drawn and one tiny light on only." Her posture alters from good carriage to slumping "with her shoulders hunched in toward her

chest and her head down." Her major social contact on a down day is Elizabeth Frazer, who walks ahead of Lisa and greets people while Lisa hovers "behind her, saying nothing." Even their conversation seems covert.)

5. Describe the scene in which Lisa meets Dr. Neil Donovan.

(Dr. Donovan picks up the girls, who are "nearly hysterical with happiness and anticipation," and drives them to the hospital. Their mood sobers as the elevator stops. Dr. Donovan leads them Indian style, Elizabeth first followed by M.N. and then Betsy. M.N. is the first to enter the hospital room.

Like a corpse, Lisa lies "in bed looking up at the ceiling. She hardly moved . . ." At M.N.'s whispered call, Lisa's head falls to the side, but her unblinking eyes reveal no hint of recognition. At this point, Elizabeth takes charge and introduces Dr. Donovan as a personal friend who "can help you, if you want him to.")

Dr. Donovan's smile and touch are unhurried. Quietly he says, "I'm very glad . . . finally to meet you, Lisa." Lisa looks to Elizabeth for reassurance. Then a single tear falls, followed by a "whole torrent." M.N. and Betsy weep "with relief and joy and who knows what else." After kissing Lisa on the cheek, they withdraw to the elevator to share their glee.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. How does Mr. Goodman help Lisa?

(On the surface, Mr. Goodman's role appears small. During an afternoon meeting of "Fickett, Frazer, Goodman, and Shilling," Mr. Goodman walks in and greets the girls. Betsy points out that Mr. Goodman knows nothing about Lisa's condition because she doubts that he can help. The three teen therapists try to conceal Lisa from view when she suddenly greets Mr. Goodman with a smile

After a harmless exchange of pleasantries between Lisa and Mr. Goodman, Lisa walks to the window and "walked right through it." Mr. Goodman thus becomes "an adult witness" to Lisa's bizarre behavior. A keen observer, he remarks, "She knew exactly what she was doing . . . What the hell is the matter with her." From this point on in the story, the girls have a strong ally. Even Lisa realizes his value to her well-being, opens her eyes, smiles and thanks him before sinking into unconsciousness.)

7. How does Mrs. Shilling ignore a second warning of Lisa's illness?

(Having excused M.N.'s earlier visit as teenage silliness, Mrs. Shilling arrives at the Goodman house and witnesses Lisa's bleeding wounds from the broken glass. Her first suspicion is that Lisa was pushed. Since Mr. Goodman can corroborate the girls' version of Lisa's plunge through the window,

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Mrs. Shilling again looks for an outside cause. She asks: "What was happening? What were you doing to her?"

M.N. again explains that "Lisa is slowly losing her mind, and she's scared to death." M.N. riles Mrs. Shilling to anger by accusing her of not paying attention to her daughter. Mrs. Shilling retorts that M.N. suffers from an overactive imagination. Even though Mrs. Shilling admits that the act demonstrates irrationality, she has "no intention of letting [Lisa] ride roughshod over us."

Elizabeth makes a pointed statement about Lisa's illness: without proper attention in the early stages, Lisa may spend her life in an institution. Mrs. Shilling makes no verbal reply. She slaps Elizabeth and receives a slap in exchange. Then Mrs. Shilling orders the girls to stay away from Lisa or else "I'll have you all put behind bars.")

8. How does this novel demonstrate that suicide is a cry for help?

(The Shillings' next opportunity to help Lisa comes during Dr. Donovan's stay at the Frazers' house. Reading from the morning paper that a teenager "of a near-by Sikhantout family was treated last night in Mount Cedar Hospital for an overdose of barbiturates," Dr. Donovan learns that the patient is Lisa. With Mr. Goodman serving as go-between, the girls make contact with Mr. Shilling and suggest that Dr. Donovan can help Lisa.

At lunch, the girls wrest information from Dr. Donovan, who describes a scenario deliberately set to attract the Shillings' attention. Lisa swallowed a handful of sleeping pills and lay "on the couch in the living room so that when her parents came home they would find her." The plan worked. Mr. Shilling is convinced that Lisa needs professional care.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why does John Neufeld demonstrate so low an opinion of school personnel?

(John Neufeld makes a strong case against the school as an effective medium for isolating and getting help for troubled students. The school counselor, Jeremy Bernstein, appears ineffective in most areas of counseling except for a single appointment with each senior to determine college plans. Likewise, teachers seem loath to take an active role in notifying the Shillings of their daughter's bizarre behavior.

On the other hand, Neufeld does not express much hope that the Reverend Mr. Fickett can help Lisa. Instead, the author turns the role over to Mr. Goodman, an insurance agent. With Mr. Goodman's practical advice and Elizabeth's analyst's aid, Lisa has a better chance of recovery at the end of the book. Still, there is no clear role of rescuer. Mainly, it

is Lisa's ingestion of barbiturates that galvanizes the Shilling family into action.

It seems that Neufeld is reminding the reader that no single agency can diagnose and obliterate all psychiatric ills from society. Other people must lend support and common sense to the situation. Without friends, parents, teachers, and local emergency personnel, Lisa might not have survived to meet Dr. Donovan. Perhaps Neufeld is encouraging the reader to take a more active role in aiding friends and acquaintances who have mental problems.)

10. Why does Neufeld assign so crucial a role to Elizabeth? (In order to demonstrate the dangers of amateur psychoanalysis, Neufeld creates a character who has experienced mental illness and has known people with Lisa's symptoms. To balance the enthusiasm with which M.N. tries to solve the problem, Neufeld insists on a stabilizer in the group who has enough background information to know when expert advice is necessary.

After Mr. Shilling perceives Lisa's fragmented mental state, the girls hope that he can override Mrs. Shilling's objections. M.N. comments, "I feel sort of sorry for her. Not that she deserves it, mind you. But it must be hell realizing one of your kids is crazy." Elizabeth uses the opportunity to remind M.N. that human beings are "single things with their own problems that won't be solved by someone else's determination.")

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Write a series of reports on famous people who have suffered depression, hallucinations, or serious mental breakdowns, such as Vincent Van Gogh, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Joan of Arc, Adolf Hitler, Nero, and Jonathan Swift. Explain how their individual mental states affected their power or creativity.
12. Suggest ways that Betsy, Elizabeth, and M.N. can welcome Lisa back to school without embarrassing her. Make a list of activities that will make Lisa feel normal again. Include methods by which her family can get in closer contact with their daughters.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a letter from Lisa to Elizabeth, Mary Nell, or Betsy after a month of treatment. Compose a second letter at the end of the summer. Reveal in your letters the changes in Lisa's outlook toward self-confidence and sanity.
2. Using at least three sources, write a report on the psychoanalytic methods of Dr. Sigmund Freud. Explain how analysis of dreams and free association helped his patients.
3. Prepare an oral report on a person you would turn to if

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you felt your life or sanity were threatened. Emphasize the qualities in that person which inspire your trust.

TEACHING NOTES

4. On a map of your state, pinpoint places where the mentally ill can go for treatment. Star the institutions which are state-supported. Circle the institutions that specialize in the treatment of young patients, particularly drug addicts or alcoholics.
5. Research figures on suicide and attempted suicide. Make a chart by age to indicate what state of life is most affected. If the information is available, include figures on the ways in which people try to kill themselves.
6. Keep a detailed glossary of clinical terminology from the novel, such as *acute*, *chronic*, *psychotic*, *neurotic*, *catatonic*, *paranoia*, *manic-depressive*, *group therapy*, and *schizophrenia*.
7. Lead a panel discussion analyzing Betsy's distrust of teachers, parents, and especially Mr. Bernstein. Give reasons why adults are hesitant to believe the girls' diagnosis. Discuss why the Shillings would rather not believe that Lisa is ill.
8. Make a wall chart in which you divide Lisa's erratic behavior into three time sequences: at first, when the girls begin to notice it; after the girls began treating Lisa with group therapy; after Lisa tries to commit suicide the first time. Underline any symptoms that appear at all three stages of her illness.
9. Explain in a paragraph why Brian Morris does not stand by Lisa during her illness. Suggest reasons that the author shows her surrounded by girlfriends rather than teenagers of both sexes.
10. Compose a dialogue between Dr. Neil Donovan and Tracy Shilling in which he suggests ways that Tracy can help her sister adjust to home life again. Reveal through their conversation the warmth that both people feel for Lisa.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Replace the underlined words in each of the following lines with an antonym from the list below.

- _____ 1. It's a little unnerving.
- _____ 2. But her hands would sort of release themselves, and the pencil she ordinarily clutched like a talisman would slip out of her grip and roll into her lap.
- _____ 3. It's the kind of well-meant statement that just rolls around and rankles like crazy when you're in front of a mirror looking into a horn-rimmed face.
- _____ 4. It was a rasping sound, still in a strange tone, and it began to change as we all were still, shocked.
- _____ 5. Of course, I'm partial to Paul Newman.
- _____ 6. A perfect example of persecution complex, otherwise known as paranoia.
- _____ 7. No one was free of neuroses or symptoms, latent or overt.
- _____ 8. That all we could expect from here on in was silence, immobility, a zombie, in fact.
- _____ 9. Hindsight, that's called.
- _____ 10. She's about forty with a good enough figure and abominable taste in clothes.
- _____ 11. Mr. Frazer is a quiet, distinguished-looking man about sixty who has real style.
- _____ 12. Because Daddy would simply tell us to stop muddying waters that even doctors can't clear.
- _____ 13. I've been working for years to become hard, sophisticated, worldly, and exciting.
- _____ 14. I can honestly say her behavior is anything but strictly rational.
- _____ 15. She was late to almost every appointment, and she was getting to be a pro about disappearing for hours at a time.

absurd admirable animation clairvoyance gratification jinx
mellifluous naive neophyte oblivious placates seedy settling soothing unconcealed

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following quotations with the speakers. Choose your answers from the list of characters below.

- _____ 1. . . . I didn't feel the same way Mary Nell did about her silences. They could be broken when *she* wanted to break them.
- _____ 2. . . . I saw people like Lisa there. Lisa's not a new experience for me.
- _____ 3. The principal's a very busy man. He might misunderstand what we were saying and dismiss Miss Shilling altogether
- _____ 4. You've tried twice to tell us Lisa is going crazy. It's your doing, Mary Nell.
- _____ 5. When Daddy came back from Europe, I told him everything that had happened.
- _____ 6. I hope you're not so well read as Mary Nell is . . . I've a feeling I need a refresher course in psychological terminology.
- _____ 7. What am I going to do all summer? I'll be alone!
- _____ 8. Why can't you all stop it, and leave me be?
- _____ 9. Betsy, in her own way, wants to help as badly, but she doesn't judge. She *feels* for Lisa, instead.
- _____ 10. Betsy . . . you're near the door. Will you walk back and see what, if anything, is holding up those two girls?
- _____ 11. Didn't she come back beautiful and rested? What more does she need?
- _____ 12. I'm one of those sandwich board carriers you see, whose church comes in the form of believing in man.
- _____ 13. I'm not unreasonable, and I'm not a villain. But what's the evidence?
- _____ 14. Go on! Go on! Don't stop now! Think of something, do something, do anything!
- _____ 15. We can't walk in, unasked, and cart Lisa away from her family.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| A. Elizabeth | F. Mr. Frazer |
| B. social science teacher | G. Betsy Goodman |
| C. Mr. Bernstein | H. Lisa Shilling |
| D. Mr. Shilling | I. Mr. Milne |
| E. Dr. Neil Donovan | J. Mrs. Shilling |

Part II: True/False (30 points)

Mark each statement either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Dr. Brody calls in Dr. Donovan for consultation on the Frazers' recommendation.
- _____ 2. M.N. thinks that Betsy is disloyal for practicing her Joanne Woodward smile on Brian.
- _____ 3. After Mr. Jackson's conference with the teachers, everyone at school shows more compassion for Elizabeth's bruises and cut lip.
- _____ 4. Betsy is impressed by Elizabeth's confidence.
- _____ 5. Lisa deliberately walks through plate glass to gain adult attention.
- _____ 6. Lisa willingly attends therapy sessions.

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- _____ 7. M.N. witnesses a fit of madness in which Lisa pounds her head against the headboard of her bed.
- _____ 8. Lisa meets Brian in Florida, but parts with him after six weeks.
- _____ 9. Mrs. Shilling offers little attention toward Lisa or Tracy, but slaps M.N. for interfering in Lisa's private life.
- _____ 10. Mr. Frazer seems natural, whereas Mr. Shilling seems like a phony.
- _____ 11. M.N. watches as Lisa hides under Mr. Milne's desk and sticks pins into her arm.
- _____ 12. During Elizabeth's stay at the Florida hospital, her parents move to Long Island.
- _____ 13. M.N.'s father owns books on counseling and psychology because he works as a school counselor.
- _____ 14. After the anniversary celebration, Brian never approaches Lisa again.
- _____ 15. During calculus class, Lisa tiptoes to Miss Strane's desk and whispers the answer to a question.

Part III: Identification (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following details from the story.

1. dark clothes
2. "English" voice
3. barbiturates
4. Mrs. Shilling's kitchen
5. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Explain how Mr. Goodman helps the Shillings understand Lisa's illness.
2. Describe how Lisa's friendship with Elizabeth differs from her other friendships.
3. Discuss why Dr. Donovan believes that fellow students can be cruel to young mental patients.
4. What aspects of a normal home seem to be lacking at the Shilling house?

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select an answer to complete each of the following statements. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided.

- _____ 1. Lisa hides under Mr. Milne's desk (a) before her first anniversary party (b) to avoid a social science exam (c) and pricks herself with a pin (d) when Dr. Donovan comes to visit.
- _____ 2. On the day that Betsy concentrates on *Raintree County*, (a) Lisa comes to visit (b) Elizabeth reveals her past experience as a mental patient (c) Lisa pushes Elizabeth into the hot coals (d) the Shillings find Lisa on the living room sofa.
- _____ 3. Mr. Fickett earns his living as a (a) calculus teacher (b) insurance salesman (c) businessman (d) minister.
- _____ 4. Elizabeth misses school so that she can (a) visit Lisa in the hospital in Florida (b) get help for Lisa from Dr. Donovan (c) telephone Mr. Shilling to inform him of Lisa's illness (d) locate psychology books in the library.
- _____ 5. When Betsy walks into the room to talk with Neil, (a) she fails to impress him with her Joanne Woodward smile (b) he causes her to shed a single tear (c) she compares his features with those of Brian Morris (d) her voice moves from a cough to a coarse English accent.
- _____ 6. After Lisa's dive through the window, (a) Elizabeth predicts that her fall will be followed by a precatatonic stage (b) she says "Thank you" to Mr. Goodman (c) Mr. Bernstein suggests that she be sent to a rest home (d) Neil reads about the incident in the morning newspaper.
- _____ 7. At the dinner table in front of M.N., (a) Betsy moves off to a spot by herself (b) Brian flirts with Elizabeth (c) Lisa asks to see a psychiatrist (d) Lisa's laughter changes to hysterical cries for help.
- _____ 8. Mr. Bernstein acknowledges that Lisa (a) watches too many movies (b) should stay at school until exams are over (c) is a good match for Brian (d) is indeed a bright girl.
- _____ 9. It is unusual when a junior in high school (a) is elected president of the student council (b) takes social science and calculus (c) misses an exam without giving a good excuse (d) asks Mr. Milne for help in selecting a college.
- _____ 10. During the process of counseling Lisa, (a) M.N. learns how Elizabeth overcame schizophrenia (b) Betsy gains confidence and maturity (c) Tracy feels left out of her sister's life (d) Dr. Brody discovers why Lisa has bad dreams.

Part II: Fill-in the Blanks (30 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers which complete each statement. Refer to the list that follows for possible answers.

- _____ 1. "Well, I see her every day in school," _____ answered. "I can honestly say her behavior is anything but strictly rational."
- _____ 2. Or _____, as my father says. Choosing what you want to hear and concentrating only on that.
- _____ 3. The trouble with _____ is that they collapse when they meet other reasonable adult human beings.
- _____ 4. It's like being in a _____ course. I'm being talked at all the time.
- _____ 5. . . . one Friday in homeroom, we were all talking about a trip we were making the next day into a poor part of town to help clean up the neighborhood after an enormous _____.
- _____ 6. If Joanne married gorgeous _____, her smile must have had some effect!
- _____ 7. I waited for the right moment and then swung both arms up and over Lisa's head from behind, bringing my hands down, fingers locked together, covering her _____.

LISA, BRIGHT AND DARK

- _____ 8. For some reason, I knew Lisa was relying on _____ to solve her problem — not the madness, but the aloneness, the agony, the fear she felt.
- _____ 9. . . . all we could expect from here on in was silence, immobility, a _____, in fact.
- _____ 10. “_____,” she said, “you may have saved Lisa’s life.”
- _____ 11. _____ took the blow without flinching and then, not even blinking, flashed out and clipped Mrs. Shilling right back! Wowie!!!
- _____ 12. She told us how it was a state law that if a _____ discovered a suicide attempt, it had to assign a psychiatrist to the person who had tried it.
- _____ 13. To begin with, there’s Mary Nell Fickett, who used to *live* in _____.
- _____ 14. When *she* noticed it no one knew, but it was long before she tried to kill _____ and, after that, herself.
- _____ 15. It got to the point where by her _____ you could tell her frame of mind.

Brian California clothes counselors Elizabeth eyes fire hospital lecture
Mr. Goodman Mr. Milne Paul reasonable adult human beings
selective inattention zombie

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- _____ 1. Who informs the girls that Lisa has gone home from the hospital?
- _____ 2. Who pays for Dr. Donovan's visit?
- _____ 3. Who spends a whole day talking with Lisa’s teacher and Mr. Bernstein?
- _____ 4. What anniversary are Lisa and Brian celebrating?
- _____ 5. Which character is not going away for the summer?
- _____ 6. Which character believes that she counts “less than almost anyone else in this whole story”?
- _____ 7. Whom does M.N. send Betsy for after Lisa hides under Mr. Milne’s desk?
- _____ 8. Which family has a pink living room that is rarely used?
- _____ 9. Who believes that she is not smart or rich enough to get into Smith?
- _____ 10. Who whispers an answer into Miss Strane's ear?

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Discuss the significance of the following quotations from the novel.

1. It’s better to live than to think about living.
2. It seemed there was someone inside her who was carrying on a very serious, very long and detailed conversation with her, and these nods were her way of speaking whole volumes with the least possible effort.
3. Lisa’s not a new experience for me.
4. It’s not easy not to make fun of someone who’s just come out of a . . . a nuthouse.

LISA, BRIGHT AND DARK

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. soothing | 9. clairvoyance |
| 2. jinx | 10. admirable |
| 3. placates | 11. seedy |
| 4. mellifluous | 12. settling |
| 5. oblivious | 13. naive |
| 6. gratification | 14. absurd |
| 7. unconcealed | 15. neophyte |
| 8. animation | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. E | 11. C |
| 2. A | 7. G | 12. I |
| 3. C | 8. H | 13. D |
| 4. J | 9. A | 14. H |
| 5. A | 10. B | 25. E |

Part II: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T | 2. T |
| 2. F | 7. T | 12. F |
| 3. F | 8. F | 13. F |
| 4. T | 9. F | 14. F |
| 5. T | 10. T | 15. T |

Part III: Identification (10 points)

1. Lisa selects dark clothes and makeup during periods of insanity. When she is in control, her clothing reflects normal taste and outlook.
2. As Lisa shifts from sane to insane, she speaks in her "English" voice, which is short, clipped, and rude.
3. To gain her parents' attention and dramatize her plight, Lisa swallows a handful of her mother's sleeping pills and lies down on the living room sofa where the family will find her.
4. On M.N.'s first attempt to discuss Lisa's madness, she never gets past Mrs. Shilling's kitchen. Mrs. Shilling is so angry at M.N.'s interference that she asks M.N. to leave.

5. After learning a bit about psychology, M.N. feels qualified to analyze Lisa as well as parents, teachers, and Mr. Bernstein. Even Dr. Neil Donovan notices M.N.'s familiarity with psychological terminology.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)
Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

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

Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Mr. Milne | 8. Elizabeth |
| 2. selective inattention | 9. zombie |
| 3. reasonable adult human beings | 10. Mr. Goodman |
| 4. lecture | 11. Elizabeth |
| 5. fire | 12. hospital |
| 6. Paul | 13. California |
| 7. eyes | 14. Elizabeth |
| | 15. clothes |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. Brian | 6. Betsy |
| 2. Mr. Frazer | 7. nurse |
| 3. Dr. Donovan | 8. Shilling |
| 4. first | 9. Betsy |
| 5. Betsy | 10. Lisa |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)
Answers will vary.



PERMA-BOUND • VANDALIA ROAD • JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS 62650

Call toll free 1-800-637-6581