

SYNOPSIS

In November 1843, Lyddie Worthen lives on a small, barren farm in Vermont with her mother and younger siblings Charles, Agnes, and Rachel. Only ten-year old Charles is any help on the farm; the other siblings are babies, too young to be of any assistance. Mama, unable to cope with the unending trials of rural poverty, lost her grip on reality when her husband left to seek his fortune in the West. She has found solace in religious fanaticism and anxiously awaits the end of the world. Even though only a child herself, Lyddie has assumed the role of head of the family. When a bear storms into the house, Lyddie hustles the family up to the loft, thereby saving their lives. The only damage is to the front door of the small cabin.

Soon after, Mama takes the two younger children and goes to live with her sister Clarissa. This is the only way the family can avoid losing the farm and being forced into the poor house. Lyddie and Charlie are left alone on the farm during the brutal winter. The children eke out an existence eating bark soup and rabbit stew. That spring, the children receive a letter from Mama stating that she has hired out Charlie as a mill apprentice and Lyddie as a tavern servant. In addition, Mama has rented out the farm to pay for the family's debts. The children are distraught at being separated and forced to leave their home, but they have no choice. They sell their bony calf to Quaker Stevens. The Stevens's farm, in sharp contrast to the Worthen home, is bustling and prosperous. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens and their eldest son Luke treat the children with great kindness, giving them far more money than the calf is worth, a warm meal, and a ride into town. Luke even offers to look after the Worthens' home until the children can reclaim it.

Ragged and dirty, Lyddie arrives at Cutler's Tavern. The owner, disgusted at the child's appearance, relegates her to a corner in the kitchen. Just as she stared down the bear, Lyddie withstands the owner's cruelty and proves herself a hard worker. She earns the admiration of Triphena, the cook. Lyddie is enthralled by the seemingly lavish dress and fine manners of one of the guests, a mill girl from Lowell, Massachusetts.

That spring, the tavern owner goes away for a few days and Triphena tells Lyddie to visit her brother Charlie at the mill. Charlie is flourishing. The mill owners have taken a fancy to him and treat him well. He is allowed to attend school when not working and is dressed and fed bountifully by his new family. Lyddie next goes to her house, and is astonished to find a black man living there. He is an escaped slave named Ezekial Abernathy, traveling the Underground Railroad to freedom. The Stevens family are a station on the Railroad, helping slaves escape north. Touched by the man's plight, Lyddie impulsively gives him all the money she got from selling the calf, the money she was saving to pay off her

family's debts and buy back the farm. Ezekial is impressed by Lyddie's generosity and promises to repay the debt when he is free. When Lyddie returns to the tavern, the owner fires her for taking the day off. Lyddie decides to become a mill girl in Lowell, Massachusetts. Triphena gives Lyddie some money and a pair of boots. Lyddie sets off on her journey. The coachman takes a fancy to her and directs her to his sister's boarding house. The sister, a kindly woman named Mrs. Bedlow, gives Lyddie a bath, food, a room, and secures a job for her at the mill.

At first, Lyddie cannot bear the murky air and deafening clamor of the machines. Although used to backbreaking work, Lyddie cannot keep up with the demands of the machines. A fellow worker, Diana Goss, helps Lyddie learn the routine. The other girls are horrified that Lyddie is associating with Diana, a labor organizer, but Lyddie is drawn to Diana's goodness and generosity. In the evenings, the girls in the boarding house read to Lyddie, who is enthralled by *Oliver Twist*. With the first of her hard-earned money, she buys a copy of the book and copies pages out to post on the loom as she works. In this way, she learns to read. Soon, Lyddie is able to handle the looms on her own.

Her mother writes to say that baby Agnes has died. Lyddie becomes obsessed with saving money; her thrift and solitary ways become legend among her co-workers. The other girls protest the brutal work conditions, even signing a petition for a ten-hour day, but Lyddie fears the radicals will spoil her only chance to reclaim her home. She works six days a week from dawn to dusk. The furious pace proves too much; she makes a careless mistake and is nearly killed by a shuttle. Diana rushes to her aid, even finding a doctor who does not charge for his care. By this time, nearly all of Lyddie's roommates are beginning to develop "mill cough," a sign that they will die unless they leave the mill.

Luke Stevens brings Lyddie the money she had loaned to the slave Ezekial. Lyddie realizes how much she has changed, becoming hard, stingy, and machine-like. Soon after, Charlie arrives with a surprise—their sister Rachel. Their mother has been committed to the state mental hospital and Rachel has nowhere to live. Lyddie convinces the kindly Mrs. Bedlow to shelter the child and Lyddie gets her a job in the mill. But Rachel is a fragile child and cannot withstand the rigors of mill life. When she, too, develops the cough, Lyddie is forced to send the child to live with Charlie. Lyddie realizes she has lost the one part of her life she had loved.

Lyddie's mother dies in the asylum. Her uncle sells the farm to pay the cost of her mother's care. Now Lyddie has nothing to work for anymore. Lyddie helps break in a new girl, Brigid. When she protects Brigid from the overseer's sexual advances, Lyddie is fired. She blackmails the overseer, Mr. Marsden, to protect Brigid's job. Lyddie has only been at the mill one year, but it feels like an eternity. She decides that

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it is time to move on.

Lyddie returns to the cabin, her home. Luke Stevens proposes marriage, but Lyddie decides to go to Oberlin College. The novel ends with the hint that Lyddie and Luke might marry at a later time.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katherine Womeldorf Paterson was born in 1932 in Qing Jiang, China, the daughter of missionaries. Unlike most American missionaries in China in the 1930s, the Womeldorfs lived among the Chinese. As a child, Katherine spoke Chinese before English. The family returned to America several times, and when Katherine was twelve years old, they moved to the United States permanently. Katherine found the transition between cultures difficult. She spoke English with a British accent. The trauma of cultural dislocation is evident in the story she tells about not receiving a single Valentine day card one February 14. Her mother asked Katherine why she didn't write a story about the event. "But, Mother," Katherine answered, "all my stories are about the time I didn't get any valentines."

In 1950, Katherine enrolled in King College in Bristol, Tennessee, graduating in 1954. She taught school in Lovettsville, Virginia for a year before earning her master's degree in Christian education in Richmond, Virginia. Soon after, Paterson served as a missionary in Japan. The experience proved to be very influential on her writing. The four years she spent in Japan made an indelible impression and once again Katherine had difficulty adjusting to American life.

While at Union Theological Seminary in New York, she met John Barstow Paterson, a Presbyterian minister. In 1962, the two were married. Paterson began a new career as a wife and mother. She gave birth to two sons and adopted two daughters. While pregnant with her first son and awaiting the arrival of her first daughter from a Chinese orphanage, Paterson began writing.

Two years later, in 1964, Paterson accepted her first professional writing assignment, creating curriculum. "I became a writer," she said, ". . . without ever really formulating the ambition to become one. I turned to fiction, because that is what I most enjoy reading." Her first novel, *The Sign of the Chrysanthemum*, was published in 1973. This was followed by *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, *The Master Puppeteer*, and *A Bridge to Terabithia* and many other superb novels.

After winning her 1981 Newbery Medal, Paterson was asked about her plans for the future. "Why do I have to stop doing what I most want to do?" she replied. "If my aim as a writer has been to gain recognition or win a prize," she continued, "well, then, these aims have been reached, and I could and should go on to something else; but my aim, like that of most writers of fiction, is to tell a story. My gift seems to be that I am one of those fortunate people who can, if she works hard at it, uncover a story that children will enjoy."

CRITIC'S CORNER

Paterson is one of the most celebrated young adult authors. Her novels have been extremely well received and she has won all the major awards in children's literature—many times over. *Lyddie* was named an ALA Notable Book, ALA Best Book for Young Adults, *American Bookseller* "Pick of the Lists," *Booklist* Editor's Choice, *School Library Journal* Best Book of 1991, and *Parent's Magazine* Best Book.

M. Sarah Smedman, a professor at the University of North

Carolina at Charlotte, praises Paterson's extraordinary accomplishments this way: "Katherine Paterson's reverence for words, coupled with her respect for the power of story, prompted her to keep writing for years when, not ready to publish, she was learning her craft. Her reluctance overcome, her apprenticeship served, the stories and essays Paterson published established her as a major artist, skilled, discerning, and compassionate. What she has written achieves excellence because her artistic vision embraces all that is human and because she is a master craftsman."

One of the most distinctive qualities of Paterson's art is her use of compression. Whether narrating or describing, Paterson dramatizes rather than explains. This creates powerful scenes in which the action quietly elicits and restrains the emotional response. As a result, gestures and dialogue are realistic, not strained. Paterson skillfully weaves plot and symbols into tightly meshed stories. Each character, episode, and bit of dialogue helps bring the author's imagination to life. Readers come away from Paterson's books with images sharply engraved on their mind's eye. Her characters resonate; her stories are unforgettable. As Paterson herself says in *Gates of Excellence*, she strives to make the connections "in the living of this life that will reveal the little truths. . . that point to the awesome, unknowable unity, the Truth, which holds us together and makes us members of one another."

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To explore family obligations
2. To compare and contrast life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
3. To contrast settings
4. To discuss opportunities available to women in the nineteenth century
5. To probe the tragic realities of poverty
6. To realize the importance of education, especially reading
7. To contrast the needs of the family versus the needs of the individual
8. To decode symbols
9. To chart the effect of human cruelty and kindness
10. To describe different cultural norms

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the relationship between Lyddie and her family, especially her closeness to her brother Charlie and sister Rachel
2. To note Lyddie's deep sense of responsibility
3. To understand why Lyddie works so hard to reclaim her home and farm
4. To comprehend why Lyddie is forced to go to the mills
5. To analyze what Diana Goss represents to Lyddie and the other mill girls
6. To discuss how Mr. Marsden abuses the power of his office
7. To understand what the bear comes to symbolize
8. To probe the effects of the industrial revolution on the individual and the country
9. To discuss slavery and the Quakers' role in the Underground Railroad
10. To understand why Lyddie rejects Luke's marriage proposal and goes to college instead

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MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint the context in which the item appears.

1. Truth be told, Mama had gone somewhat queer in the head after their father had left. (Chap. 1, p. 5)
(As with a number of poor men in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Lyddie's father has left the family in the East to homestead in the West. Her husband's departure severed Mama's already fragile hold on reality. Mama has fixed her sights on the next world and relinquished all responsibility for her family. Although she is not as strange as her sister Clarissa and her "end-of-the-world-shouting husband Judah," Mama is unable to deal with the family's dire poverty. This leaves Lyddie, only a child, to worry about feeding, clothing, and protecting the family.)
2. "Yes," she added, answering her questioner's stare, "I'm one of those factory girls." (Chap. 3, p. 25)
*(While working as a kitchen servant at Cutler's Tavern, Lyddie speaks briefly with a factory girl who is passing through town. Lyddie is overcome by the woman's fine appearance, especially her rich pink silk outfit and refined speech. Brutally poor, Lyddie has never seen anyone as well-dressed and cultivated as this woman. When the mill girl tells Lyddie that she, too, can earn \$2 a week, Lyddie recoils in disbelief. No girl could make that much money in a week's time, Lyddie thinks.
In the first half of the 19th century, Lowell, Massachusetts, mushroomed from a sleepy country village into one of the major cotton-manufacturing centers in New England. The Concord and Merrimack rivers furnished the power that drove the looms and spinning machines. Prominent visitors such as Andrew Jackson, Charles Dickens, and Davy Crockett came to admire the new factories; they praised the remarkable working girls of Lowell. Paterson drops the mention of the mill girls here to make Lyddie's ultimate journey to the mill more believable.)*
3. And then, without even thinking, she thrust her hand into her pocket and held out to him the calf-money bag. "You might need something along the way," she said. (Chap. 6, p. 43)
(Ezekial Abernathy is escaping from slavery. He is traveling north to freedom, aided by the kindly Quaker family. Felled by pneumonia, Ezekial has stopped to rest during the worst of winter in Lyddie's home. Lyddie surprises Ezekial and hears his story. Sick and penniless, he dreams of reaching safety in Canada so he can send for his wife and child. His plight touches a chord in Lyddie's soul: somewhere, perhaps, her father was saying those very same words. Spontaneously, Lyddie gives him all the money she has gotten for the sale of the calf—all the money she has in the world, the money she is hoarding to pay off her family's debts, reunite the family, and reclaim their home. This quote reveals Lyddie's essential goodness. Her generous nature gets perverted once she begins to work in the mill. Forced to work harder and harder, she loses sight of her desire to help others.)
4. "Now," said Amelia, who was far more conscientious about her duties as a caretaker than Lyddie would have wished, "where will you be going to church on the Sabbath?" (Chap. 8, p. 57)
(In the mid-nineteenth century, it was unusual to find women working in factories. Married ladies and young girls alike were expected to busy themselves in the home, within the family circle. But because women were familiar with keeping bobbin and loom threads smooth and untangled, the mill owners of Lowell sought out local girls for their factories. It was a battle to hire the women because no God-fearing father was willing to send his young, respectable daughter away from home and family. Faced with such strong resistance, the mill owners had no choice but to provide the moral atmosphere and protection that young ladies needed. They did so by building company-owned boarding houses where the girls could live under the watchful eye of the matron. They encouraged young women to attend church weekly to maintain the wholesome atmosphere. This also served to keep a fresh stream of workers coming to the mills to replace those felled by the horrific working conditions.)
5. "Uh-uh *Oliver Twist*, if you please, sir," she managed to stammer out. (Chap. 11, p. 84)
*(Lyddie is typical of the mill girls in her lust for learning. Virtually illiterate when she first came to the mills, Lyddie soon learns to read with the help of the other girls and her own determination. She yearns to have her own books. With her first earnings, she buys the book that mirrors her life: *Oliver Twist*. Paterson cleverly underscores the parallels between Lyddie's life and *Oliver's* in the phrase "if you please, sir," *Oliver's* famous plea for more food.
Working the same twelve-hour day they had been accustomed to on the farm, these country girls still had the stamina and interest to pursue a variety of intellectual interests. They crowded into lecture halls to hear famous men like Ralph Waldo Emerson speak; they purchased books. Their reading was extensive in part because they shared books with one another—often smuggling books into the factory—to their overseers' anger.)*
6. It was almost as if they had exchanged natures, as though she had become the machine, perfectly tuned to the roaring clattering beasts in her care. (Chap. 13, p. 97)
(This passage shows how Lyddie is losing her humanity to the cruel demands of mill work. Lyddie has forsaken all the pleasures we associate with humanity. She does not pay attention to what she eats at the boarding house, even when the work declines and the matron Mrs. Bedlow is forced to serve moldy potatoes and rancid meat. She shuns companionship, both male and female. She rejects the other girls' offers to accompany them to church, socials, and lectures. She never goes outside on her one day a week off, even when the weather is glorious. Even her sleep gives no real rest.)
7. Oh! I cannot be a slave, /I will not be a slave. (Chap. 13, p. 100)
(In many ways, Lyddie's situation is parallel to Ezekial's.

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Both are slaves, although Lyddie refuses to acknowledge it. Ezekial is enslaved by his color; Lyddie by her poverty and gender. Ezekial, however, throws off his bonds to seek freedom. Lyddie, in contrast, refuses to take her own destiny in her hands. She will not admit that the mill owners are speeding up the machines to make more money; initially, she will not even help the Irish Catholic immigrant Brigid learn to work the machines. Lyddie is terribly afraid that she will lose her job to one of these lower-priced immigrants: "She could not fall behind in her production, else her pay would drop and before she knew it one of those cussed papists would have her job.")

8. In her uneasy sleep she saw the bear again, but, suddenly, in the midst of his clumsy thrashing about, he threw off the pot and was transformed, leaping like a spring buck up into the loft where they were huddled. And she could not stare him down. (Chap. 15, p. 126)
(The bear is the central symbol in the novel. A symbol is a person, place, or object that represents an abstract idea. For example, a dove may symbolize peace or a rose may symbolize love. In the first chapter, a bear nearly kills the family. Only Lyddie's quick thinking saves them all. As the novel progresses, however, the bear becomes a metaphor for all the world's danger, fear, and injustice, including Papa's absence and bad luck, Mama's insanity, the brutal conditions in the mill, and Mr. Marsden's sexual abuse of the girls. Focusing on the last example, readers can infer that Mr. Marsden preys on many of the girls. When Marsden abuses the newcomer Brigid, Lyddie throws a bucket of water on his head. At that moment, she is reminded of the angry bear crashing the oatmeal pot against the furniture [p. 161]. In chapter 22, Lyddie believes that "the bear had won. It had stolen her home, her family, her work, her good name." But she rallies her strength to make peace with the world's injustice and undertake a career as a student. At the end of the novel, Lyddie stares down her fears, throws off the yoke of oppression, and moves ahead bravely with her life.)
9. She thought she had heard Betsy again—that wretched hacking sound that sawed through her rib cage straight into her heart. And then she was wide awake and knew it to be Rachel. (Chap. 17, p. 139)
(Rachel is the only bright spot in Lyddie's life. With Rachel, Lyddie has someone to love, and someone who loves her wholeheartedly. But life in the mills is killing Rachel. With the greatest pain, Lyddie must relinquish that which she loves the most. The pain of sending Rachel to live with Charlie is so bad that Lyddie compares it to a "rusty blade" slicing through her heart [p. 143]. Nonetheless, "if she stays here with me, she will die. If I cling to her, it will be her death," Lyddie realizes [p. 143]. This incident is another example of Lyddie's selfless nature and innate generosity.)
10. We can stil hop, Luke Stevens, Lyddie said, but not aloud. (Chap. 23, p. 182)
(Lyddie's mother had written "We can stil hop" instead of "We can still hope" in her first letter to the children. She was referring to her belief in the imminent end of the world. The misspelling becomes an affectionate joke

between Lyddie and her brother Charlie, a code for their unending belief that their lives would get better. At the end of the novel, it suggests that Lyddie will marry Luke Stevens once she can come to him as an equal, educated and self-confident.)

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 from the novel.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. How does Lyddie's mother try to pay off her debts?
(Mama does three things in her attempt to pay off what the family owes: she rents out the family's fields, horse, and cow; she sends Charlie to work for free at the miller's; she sends Lyddie to be a scullery maid at Cutler's Inn for fifty cents a week.)
2. Why does Farmer Stevens pay so much for the children's heifer?
(Farmer Stevens pays twenty-five dollars for the children's scrawny calf, saying "I know the sire and he's of a good line" [p. 14]. He knows the sire because it is his own bull, which he let the children use for free. In effect, the calf is half his. Nonetheless, he pays far more for the heifer than it is worth. He does this because he pities the children, their homelessness, poverty, and hard luck. He wants to help them any way he can.)
3. Why is the innkeeper so horrified that Lyddie is the new hired kitchen help?
(The innkeeper looks Lyddie up and down "as though Lyddie were a stray dog who had wandered too close to her house" [p. 20]. The innkeeper is horrified at Lyddie's unkempt appearance. Lyddie suddenly becomes aware that she has no bonnet and that her hair and braids are dusty from the road. Her brown gunnysack dress is tight across her chest and hangs unevenly in a ragged hem to her ankles. Her brown feet are bare, her outgrown boots slung over her shoulder. Lyddie looks so ragged that the innkeeper assumes she is a refugee from the poor farm.)
4. Why is Betsy saving her money?
(Betsy is saving her money to finance her college education. First, she must finance her brother's education through Harvard. When the so-called "golden lad" finishes, it will be Betsy's turn. She plans to attend Oberlin College in Ohio because it is one of the few colleges in the 1840s that offered women an education equal to a man's. "Someday I'll have enough money to go to college no matter how much the piece rate drops," she declares [p. 113]. Unfortunately, she becomes too ill to fulfill her dream. It is the dream that Lyddie takes up and makes her own at the end of the story.)
5. Why does Lyddie stomp on Mr. Marsden's foot?
(Mr. Marsden is the overseer in Lyddie's section of the mill. Late in the day, at the end of a brutally difficult shift, Marsden approaches Lyddie. She cannot hear what he is saying over the din of the machines. She is ill with the flu, her head pounding and her body raging with fever. As Marsden gets closer and closer, Lyddie raises her foot and stops on his. "What made her do it? Illness?

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Desperation? She'd never know" [p. 129]. She stops on his foot to discourage his advances and escape from his "strange little mouth."

It is apparent that Mr. Marsden is sexually harassing some of the women in the mill. He approaches those who are most vulnerable. For example, he preys on Lyddie because she has made her need for the job so painfully apparent. Later he tries to molest the new immigrant Brigid because she, too, cannot afford to lose her job.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretative Level

6. Mama leaves Charlie and Lyddie alone on the farm for a season. In the spring, they are forced to leave. Could the children have survived indefinitely on their own? Why or why not?

(Alone on the farm, the children survive on boiled bark and the small game they can trap. Lyddie is convinced that she and Charlie could have fed themselves with just one good harvest or one good sugaring. That was all they needed, she believes. While some readers may argue that the children could have managed on their own, the details in the novel argue otherwise.)

Three factors are working against the children: the farm's poverty, the country's economic climate, and their own youth and inexperience. First, the family's sugar bush is scraggly and their oat crop barely enough to feed the family. Second, the children might have burned stumps as their father did to make potash, but there is no demand for this crop in either England or Vermont. Third, the children are too young and weak to survive alone. Charlie is only ten years old; Lyddie, only thirteen. Since they are malnourished, they have even less strength.)

7. Why does Lyddie continue to work so hard once her mother is dead, the farm sold, and her siblings Charlie and Rachel are well settled?

("From time to time, she wondered why she was working so hard, now that the farm was sold and Rachel and Charlie were lost to her" [p. 148]. But Lyddie brushes the question aside. She continues to work so hard because work is all that she knows, all that she has. Everything else that helped her form her identity as Lyddie Worthen had vanished: her home, parents, siblings. Nothing but work—"work so hard that her mind became as callused as her hands"—remained [p. 148]. She works to escape the emptiness of her life, the grim reality of having no bearable present or future. Every night she falls into bed utterly exhausted. Only in her dreams can Lyddie unburden the full weight of her sorrow.)

8. Why doesn't Lyddie marry Luke?

(Girls like Lyddie flocked to the mills from the countryside. They were capable, hard-working young women who were used to the difficult and unending tasks of farm life. For the princely sum of \$2 to \$3.50 a week, they watched the bobbins, tended the looms, and often packed the finished product. If they did not die from the disgraceful working conditions, they remained in the mills long enough to bank a suitable dowry and then returned home to the farm and marriage.)

This being the case, Lyddie should have followed the pattern and left the mill to marry once she had enough

money. At the end of the book she does have sufficient dowry money; in fact, she has more than she needs. Lyddie will not have many suitors: she is too plain, stubborn, and outspoken to attract many men. Further, Luke would be an excellent husband. Lyddie looks at him and realizes that he will one day become "a gentle old man . . . that she would one day love" [p. 181]. Lyddie does not marry Luke because she must "stare down the bear," as she says on page 181. "The bear that she had thought all these years was outside herself, but now, truly, knew was in her own narrow spirit. She would stare down all the bears!" [p. 181]. She rejects marriage in favor of independence, conquering her fears, and becoming her own person.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How are Luke and Diana the same?

(Both Luke and Diana are trying to make the world a better place by quietly working to eliminate "slavery." Luke and his family are abolitionists working to eliminate black slavery. They are "stations" on the "Underground Railroad," a system of houses and apartments that provided hiding places, money, and help for black slaves escaping from imprisonment in the South to freedom in the North. Diana is a tireless worker for better conditions in the mills. She strives to eliminate the system of virtual enslavement for women in Lowell, Massachusetts.)

On page 114, Lyddie begins to realize that for most of his life, Luke has been helping slaves escape. Quaker families like Luke's were well known as abolitionists. "I'm fetching some freight from down Boston way," he tells Lyddie in almost a whisper. The word "freight" is code for an escaping slave. Luke's need for security is so great that he even glances over his shoulder as he speaks. "They tend to look out for Friends on the road," he says. "They" refers to both slave catchers and slaves; "Friends" is another name for Quakers. It is Luke and his family who have sheltered Ezekial Abernathy in Lyddie's abandoned farm house; it is Luke who returns to Lyddie the money she had lent to Ezekial.)

In a parallel way, Diana Goss has devoted her adult life to helping the Lowell mill workers. As with Luke, Diana is selfless and expects no repayment. When Lyddie first arrives in the mill, Diana helps her learn how to operate the machine, sacrificing some of her own earnings to show Lyddie the routine. That night, Diana quietly insists that Lyddie write to her mother and brother Charlie to tell them where she is and that she is safe. Diana even provides the letter paper and pays for the postage. As the girls are forced to work longer hours and tend more machines, Diana steps up her efforts at reform. She meets with many of the workers, circulates a petition, and discusses the option of a strike or "turnout." But throughout, Diana is very careful not to pressure Lyddie to join the radicals nor to endanger her position in the mill in any way. For example, when Diana sees Lyddie on the streets during a labor demonstration, Diana is careful not to acknowledge Lyddie. To do so might link her to the radicals and cause her to be given an unsatisfactory discharge from the mills.)

10. How does Paterson use figures of speech in this book?

(Figures of speech are words and expressions not meant to be taken literally. Figurative language uses

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words in fresh, new ways to appeal to the imagination. Figures of speech include similes, metaphors, extended metaphors, hyperbole, and personification.

Paterson uses a great many similes and metaphors to evoke the characters' appearance and emotions. She also uses these figures of speech to paint the story's time and place.

The simile on page 91 evokes Lyddie's character by comparing it to New England granite: "As Lyddie watched, she could feel the hardness inside herself breaking, like jagged cracks across granite." A metaphor on page 170 reveals how unsettled Lyddie is about being fired from her job: "Lyddie gave a laugh more like a horse whinny than any human sound." Lyddie's emotional crisis is shown by this simile: "Everyone was kind. Diana had her family at last. Then why had something snapped like a broken warp thread inside Lyddie's soul?" [p. 176] Paterson uses a simile on page 134 to describe Lyddie's appearance: "You know I'm not the kind of girl men look at that way. I'm as plain as plowed sod."

Marsden's character is evoked by this metaphor on page 98: "Mr. Marsden did not seem to be the stuff from which contentment would be woven." Brigid's character comes across with this precise simile: "It was exactly what Lyddie remembered doing, but she knew, to her shame, that her own face had betrayed exasperation, while Brigid's was as gentle as that of a ewe nuzzling her lamb" [p. 157].

The following metaphor from page 177 shows what Vermont is like in November: "One more night along the way and the sky had turned into the underside of a thick quilt.)

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. The most remarkable legacy of the Lowell factory girls was their writing. They wrote many different types of works, including stories, essays, and poems. Many of these works were read to other girls in small literary circles or published in small church magazines. Writing as Diana Goss, create a story, poem, or essay of at least two pages that describes what life was like at the mills. Skim the pages in the novel that describe Diana's character and actions to help you capture her tone.
12. Although many different events take place in the novel, a surprisingly short amount of time passes: from November 1843 to November 1846—only three years. Within that time, Lyddie leaves her home, takes two different jobs, and refuses an offer of marriage. Her mother and youngest sister Agnes die; her brother Charlie and surviving sister Rachel are adopted by another family. Make a timeline to trace all the main events in the novel. List the events in chronological order, including where they occurred as well as when.

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Katherine Paterson's style, present the following terms and applications in her novel:

Setting is the time and place where the events take place. The setting of a story may be stated outright, or readers may have to infer it from details in the story. Writers give clues to the setting in the characters' speech, clothing, or means of transportation. *Lyddie* is

set in Vermont and Lowell, Massachusetts, in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the setting is so important to the plot and theme, Paterson even sometimes states the time and place directly in the title of specific chapters. The last chapter, for example, is titled "Vermont, November, 1846."

In some scenes, the setting becomes a crucial plot element, reinforcing the theme. For example, the grim Vermont weather in the beginning of the novel reinforces Lyddie's desperation when both her parents have deserted the family. But Lyddie is young and hopeful and so her mood lifts with the first warm spring day: "High in one of the apple trees a bluebird warbled his full spring song, chera, weera, wee-it, cheerily-cheerily. Lyddie's own spirits rose in reply" (p. 8).

Paterson uses this same device at the end of the novel, when Lyddie is returning home without any firm idea of her future plans: "It rained all the way through New Hampshire, a steady, wearying drizzle" (p. 176). The rain is echoed in Lyddie's tears: "She was grateful because she cried most of the way. She, tough-as-gristle Lyddie, her face in her handkerchief, her head turned toward the shaded window" (p. 176). As with the opening chapter, her mood inevitable lifts: "But the tumult that had raged inside her damped down more and more as though beat into the muddy earth under the horses' hooves. When they finally crossed the bridge into Vermont, the sun came out and turned the leafless trees into silver against the deep green of the evergreen on the mountain slopes. The air was clean and cold, the sky blue, more like a bright day at winter's end than November" (p. 176).

Characterization is the different ways an author tells readers about characters. Sometimes, writers tell about characters directly. Other times, writers let readers reach their own decisions by showing the comments, thoughts, and actions of the other characters. Paterson uses indirect characterization in *Lyddie*. For example, readers can infer that Lyddie is brave, resourceful, and quick-thinking from her behavior with the bear in the first chapter. In the same way, readers surmise that Mr. Marsden is nasty and retributive from his behavior toward Lyddie; he has her fired to make sure that she doesn't reveal his maltreatment of the women. Indirect characterization allows subtle shades of character development.

Theme is the main idea of a literary work, a general statement about life. The theme can be stated outright in the work, or readers will have to infer it from details about plot, characters, and setting. Readers can infer the theme of *Lyddie* from its events. One of the key details occurs at the end of the book when Lyddie says, "We can still hop." This mild joke on her mother's tortured vision of the end of the world is turned into an affirmation of human possibility and spirit: As long as there is life, there is hope. Paterson suggests that Lyddie has endured and will prevail over any trouble.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. On page 18, Paterson describes the outside of Cutler's Tavern: "The whole complex, recently painted with a mix

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of red ochre and buttermilk, stood against the sky like a row of giant beets popped clear of the earth." Draw this scene, using the rest of the description on page 18 as a guide. Be sure to reproduce the colors accurately.

2. Select any three scenes from the novel and illustrate them. Under each scene, write a caption that highlights the scene's importance in the novel.
3. With a group, create the outfit that Lyddie wore when she arrived at Cutler's Tavern.
4. Make a bulletin board showing the history of the Industrial Revolution in America.

Music

1. "The Drinking Gourd" is a spiritual that escaping slaves used to guide their way north. The "drinking gourd" was a symbol for the Big Dipper, a group of stars. Included in the Big Dipper is the North Star, the star the slaves used to navigate their way to freedom. Get a copy of "The Drinking Gourd" song and learn it. Perform it for the class or a small group of friends.
2. Lyddie likes to read the Psalms, religious songs from the Bible. She also likes to write her own songs. Create your own psalm, based on what happened in *Lyddie*. Share it with the class.
3. On page 92, Betsy sings a song about slavery. The song describes how factory girls are like slaves because neither has liberty. Write a song about the slavery of the mill girls. Use the song on page 92 to get ideas. Record your song and play it for the class.

History/Social Studies

1. The Stevens are Quakers. Who are the Quakers and what do they believe? Write a report on the Quakers. Here are some areas to research: history of the Quakers, the Quakers and abolitionism, famous Quakers, Quaker beliefs.
2. Lyddie was a mill worker in Lowell, Massachusetts. Were Lyddie's experiences typical of those of other mill workers? Find out more about the female mill workers at that time.
3. Create a map that a slave could use to escape from the south to the north. Remember that the slaves traveled by foot, mainly at night.
4. Learn more about the "Underground Railroad," the shadowy system of safe houses that helped men like Ezekial Abernathy escape slavery. Who were some of the most famous Underground Railroad "conductors"? Where were the "stations" or "depots"? Share your report with the class by making a poster or display.

Science and Health

1. A phrenologist comes to visit the girls. These phony doctors claimed to be able to tell all about a person's character from the shape of his or her skull. Find out more about phrenologists. Make a map showing the different parts of the skull they used for their readings.
2. Betsy, Rachel, and many of the mill workers suffer from the poor working conditions in the mills. Discuss the symptoms of their condition and possible treatments.
3. Lyddie's mother dies in a mental asylum. Describe aloud how people who suffer from depression are treated today. Include both medicines and psychology.

Language Arts

1. Lyddie is enthralled by Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*, a story of abuse during the Industrial Revolution. Read the novel. Then write a paper comparing and contrasting *Oliver Twist* to *Lyddie*. Show how they are the same and different.
2. On page 91, Betsy tells Lyddie how precious time is to her. Lyddie is astonished: doesn't Betsy realize that money is far more precious than time? Which young woman is right: is time or money more precious? Debate this issue with a small group of friends.
3. Make a copy of the newspaper *The Voice of Industry*. Reread page 95 for ideas about what articles and pictures to include.
4. Do you think Lyddie will marry Luke after she has completed her education? Write an outline for a sequel to the book, in which you resolve this issue.
5. Lyddie learns to read with Betsy's help and her own determination. Plan a way that you could teach someone to read. Then teach an adult or a child to read by joining Literacy Volunteers or volunteering with a teacher.

Drama

1. Working with a small group of friends, act out the scene at the end of the book where Lyddie meets with Luke. Try to capture each character's emotions at their decisions.
2. With a partner, improvise a scene between Lyddie and Diana in which each explains her attitude toward labor reform. Try to show the stress of their conflict and the reasons for their beliefs.
3. Select any chapter you especially liked and recast it as a script. Then work with a group of classmates to perform your script. You may wish to videotape your performance so you can watch it later.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. One of the books Lyddie buys is *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave Written by Himself*. Read the book and explain why Lyddie selected it. What parallels do you see between Douglass's story and Lyddie's?
2. Imagine that you are Lyddie. Write a letter to Charlie, explaining the circumstances surrounding your departure from the mill. Be sure to describe your emotions clearly.
3. Readers often select books based on critical reviews printed in journals, magazines, and newspapers. Write a review of *Lyddie* to be printed in a newspaper. In your review, analyze the novel based on such elements as characterization, setting, plot, theme, and mood. Cite specific examples and quotations from the novel to support your opinion.
4. Suppose that you were casting a movie version of *Lyddie*. List some actors and actresses who you think would be right to play the major characters in the novel. Next to each name, write a sentence explaining why you think this person would be suitable for the role.
5. Imagine that Lyddie did not leave the mill. What do you think would have happened to her? Write a scene show-

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ing a typical day in her life five years in the future.

- Lyddie buys only a few books: a Dickens novel, an autobiography, a Bible, and a dictionary. What else should she read? Make a list of ten books you think Lyddie should read to be well-educated.
- Over and over, Paterson stresses Lyddie's lack of beauty. Why do you think she makes this so clear? Join a discussion group on this issue. See how many possible reasons you can brainstorm.
- Explain in a paragraph how you would help parentless children like the Worthens. Discuss the advantages of your proposal.
- Discuss the meaning of the "kiss of death," the name the girls have given to sucking the thread in the shuttle. See page 110 for ideas to get started.
- The novel has twenty-three chapters; each has a title. Rename each chapter. Your titles should suggest the contents of the chapter and make your audience want to read the chapter.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

- List at least three scenes that show that Lyddie loves her family very much. Then discuss how Lyddie helps her family.
- Explain how the society of the mid-nineteenth century affects Lyddie and the other mill girls. Start by analyzing the options open to Lyddie as a woman: marriage, servitude, mill work.
- Hypothesize how you think Lyddie's life would be different if she had been born in 1980 rather than in 1831. Assume that her family situation and appearance are the same.
- Compose a scene in which Lyddie is reunited with her father. The scene should explain where Lyddie's father has been, why he has not contacted the family, and how well he has done.

PATERSON'S OTHER PUBLISHED WORKS

Who Am I? (novel)
Justice for All People (novel)
To Make Men Free (novel)
The Sign of the Chrysanthemum (novel)
Of Nightingales That Weep (novel)
The Master Puppeteer (novel)
Bridge to Terabithia (novel)
The Great Gilly Hopkins (novel)
Angels and Other Strangers: Family Christmas Stories (stories)
Jacob I Have Loved (novel)
Gates of Excellence: On Reading and Writing Books for Children (nonfiction)
Rebels of the Heavenly Kingdom (novel)
Come Sing, Jimmy Jo (novel)
Consider the Lilies: Plants of the Bible (nonfiction)
Once Upon a Time: Celebrating the Magic of Children's Books in Honor of the Twentieth Anniversary of Reading Is Fundamental (nonfiction)
The Tongue-Cut Sparrow (novel)
Park's Quest (novel)
Lyddie (novel)
The Mandarin Duck (novel)

The Spying Heart (novel)

RELATED READING

Charles Dicken's *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist*
Peter Hartling's *Old John, Let's Dance*, and *A Place for Jeremy*

Patricia Hermes's *You Shouldn't Have to Say Good-bye*

Emily Johnson's *A House Full of Strangers*

Paula Fox's *One-Eyed Cat*

Connie Green's *Emmy*

Mary Hahn's *The Jellyfish Season*

Mark Harris' *Come the Morning*

Jeanne Betancourt's *Valentine Blues*

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Reese, David. "Medals and Awards," *Painted Desert, Green Shade*. Boston: Horn Book, 1984, pp. 89-101.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Using the vocabulary words that follow, complete each sentence. You will have answers left over.

beholden	heathens	luxuriant	perdition	scrivener
competent	imposing	meager	plaits	trivial
decipher	infamous	murky	reeling	trousseau
eerily	jostling	oblivious	rickety	vigilant
haughtily	leisure	pate	rivulets	wretched

1. Since Lyddie could not read, she was unable to _____ the letters on the page and tell what they meant.
2. The furniture in Lyddie's house was so _____ that it seemed ready to fall apart any minute.
3. Lyddie refused to take charity because she did not want to feel _____ to anyone, especially the Stevens's family.
4. The mill room was so _____ that the other girls could not see their hands in front of their faces.
5. Many of the girls worked in the mill long enough to save money for their wedding _____: dresses, dishes, and other household necessities.
6. They were such capable, _____ workers that they were able to earn enough money for their needs.
7. But the horrible, _____ working conditions wore the girls out within a few years.
8. The girls who did not go to church were in danger of being called _____ who would not go to heaven.
9. Diana Goss was a(n) _____ labor organizer, considered a radical.
10. Lyddie thought the event was important, but it was really minor and _____.
11. Lyddie worked her way through the _____ crowd of operatives crossing the yard.
12. The patient oxen, _____ to how comically out of place they looked on a city street, chewed their cud contentedly.
13. But now she worked even harder, for who was there to share a moment's _____ with?
14. Her anger, or whatever emotion it was that kept her head _____ kept her feet moving as well.
15. Then, just as dusk, they sky opened, and it began to rain - . . . streaming down her face, icicling _____ down her chest and legs.

LYDDIE

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with each character from the novel. Choose your answers from the list below. Each answer will be used only once.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| A. Lyddie | F. Betsy | K. Judah |
| B. Charlie | G. Luke Stevens | L. Agnes |
| C. Brigid McBride | H. Triphena | M. Oliver Twist |
| D. Rachel | I. Mr. Marsden | N. Mrs. Bedlow |
| E. Diana Goss | J. Ezekial Abernathy | O. Dr. Craven |

- _____ 1. the main character in a novel by Charles Dickens
- _____ 2. the factory overseer who has Lyddie fired for "moral turpitude"
- _____ 3. Lyddie's baby sister, who dies early in the novel
- _____ 4. has Lyddie's mother committed to the state mental asylum
- _____ 5. a child who works briefly in the mills before she goes to live with Charlie
- _____ 6. the kindly landlady in the boarding house
- _____ 7. the cook at Cutler's Tavern who gives Lyddie \$5.00 and a pair of boots
- _____ 8. plans to attend Oberlin College but cannot because of illness
- _____ 9. radical labor organizer who leaves the factory to work for a seamstress
- _____ 10. the Quaker farmer who wants to marry Lyddie
- _____ 11. Lyddie's brother, apprenticed to a miller
- _____ 12. the black slave to whom Lyddie lends the heifer money
- _____ 13. nearly loses her life when hit in the head with a flying shuttle
- _____ 14. Diana's lover
- _____ 15. the gentle Irish girl whom Lyddie teaches to operate the looms

Part II: True/False (20 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is true or **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Lyddie's youngest sister Agnes is the only member of the family who dies in the bear attack.
- _____ 2. Charlie becomes an apprentice to a family that runs a mill.
- _____ 3. Tired of watching the stupid passengers, Lyddie gets the coach out of the mud.
- _____ 4. The coachman directs Lyddie to a fine but inexpensive hotel where she can stay for a month.
- _____ 5. Few of the other girls in the mill are kind to Lyddie; Diana Goss is especially mean.
- _____ 6. Lyddie is given a one-year contract in the mill.
- _____ 7. Working conditions in the mill are good: there is plenty of light and fresh air.
- _____ 8. The first book that Lyddie buys for herself is a dictionary so she will be able to learn how to read.
- _____ 9. *The Voice of Industry* is the weekly newspaper put out by the women campaigning for a ten-hour work week.
- _____ 10. When Diana is injured with a flying shuttle, Lyddie rushes to her aid.

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Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Finish each of these statements. Write your answer in the space provided.

1. Lyddie goes to work in the mills because _____

2. Rachel comes to live with Lyddie because _____

3. Diana Goss leaves the mill because _____

4. Many of the working girls sign the petition because _____

5. Rachel goes to work in the mill because _____

6. Lyddie finally goes to a union meeting because _____

7. Lyddie does not sign the petition because _____

8. Lyddie leaves the mill because _____

9. Lyddie goes back to Cutler's Tavern because _____

10. Lyddie does not marry Luke because _____

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answer two of the following in essay form.

1. Explain how Lyddie and Rachel feel about each other.
2. Analyze what the bear symbolizes in the novel.
3. Describe the role luck plays in Lyddie's life.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the best answer for each question. Write your answer in the space provided.

- _____ 1. As a result of the bear attack,
a. the family goes without dinner.
b. Agnes dies.
c. the entire cabin is destroyed.
d. the family loses all its food.
- _____ 2. Charlie becomes
a. old and worn out.
b. an apprentice in a mill.
c. a scholar at Harvard.
d. a mill worker like Lyddie
- _____ 3. Tired of watching the stupid passengers, Lyddie
a. walks to Massachusetts.
b. sulks in the corner.
c. takes the train.
d. gets the coach out of the mud herself.
- _____ 4. When Lyddie arrives at Lowell, she stays in a
a. hotel.
b. small cabin by a lake.
c. friend's house.
d. company boarding house.
- _____ 5. Diana Goss can best be described as
a. foolish.
b. saintly.
c. nasty and cruel
d. lazy.
- _____ 6. Lyddie works in the mill for
a. a week.
b. a month.
c. a year.
d. three years.
- _____ 7. Working conditions in the mill can be described as
a. good; there is plenty of light.
b. adequate.
c. very poor.
d. excellent.
- _____ 8. The first book that Lyddie buys for herself is
a. *The Life of Frederick Douglass*.
b. *Oliver Twist*.
c. a Bible.
d. a dictionary
- _____ 9. The weekly newspaper put out by the women campaigning for a ten-hour work day is called
a. *The Unifier*.
b. *The Petition*.
c. *The Lowell Girls*.
d. *The Voice of Industry*.
- _____ 10. When Lyddie is injured with a flying shuttle,
a. Rachel nurses her.
b. she is fired.
c. Diana comes to her aid.
d. Luke Stevens comes to visit.

LYDDIE

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Identify the settings that fit the following descriptions. Choose your answers from the list below. Each answer will be used only once. You will have five answers left over.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| _____ 1. place where Lyddie's mother dies | A. England |
| _____ 2. city where the mills are located | B. Cutler's Tavern |
| _____ 3. place where Ezekial Abernathy hides to avoid the slavecatchers | C. the seamstress shop |
| _____ 4. where Lyddie and Charlie sell their heifer | D. Cambridge |
| _____ 5. where Diana Goss goes to live at the end of the book | E. boarding house |
| _____ 6. state where Lyddie goes at the end of the book | F. Lyddie's cabin |
| _____ 7. country where Brigid was born | G. state mental hospital |
| _____ 8. setting where Lyddie meets Betsy, Prudence, and Amelia | H. Harvard |
| _____ 9. where Lyddie travels at the end of the book to talk to Luke Stevens | I. Vermont |
| _____ 10. where Lyddie hears the slavecatchers | J. Oberlin College |
| | K. the poor house |
| | L. the Stevens' farm |
| | M. Lowell, Massachusetts |
| | N. Ireland |
| | O. New Hampshire |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain the significance of the following details from the novel.

1. the bear
2. Lyddie's home and farm
3. Ezekial Abernathy
4. Mr. Marsden
5. the "kiss of death"

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Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answer two of the following in essay form.

1. Compare and contrast Rachel and Oliver Twist.
2. Analyze the author's use of figures of speech in the novel.
3. Trace how Lyddie changes as a result of her experiences.

LYDDIE

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. decipher | 6. competent | 11. jostling |
| 2. rickety | 7. wretched | 12. oblivious |
| 3. beholden | 8. heathens | 13. leisure |
| 4. murky | 9. infamous | 14. reeling |
| 5. trousseau | 10. trivial | 15. rivulets |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. M | 6. N | 11. B |
| 2. I | 7. H | 12. J |
| 3. L | 8. F | 13. A |
| 4. K | 9. E | 14. O |
| 5. D | 10. G | 15. C |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Cause and Effect (20 points)

Answers will vary.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. a | 6. c |
| 2. b | 7. c |
| 3. d | 8. b |
| 4. d | 9. d |
| 5. b | 10. c |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. J |
| 2. M | 7. N |
| 3. F | 8. E |
| 4. L | 9. I |
| 5. C | 10. B |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Answers will vary.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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