



# Messenger

by Lois Lowry

## Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass



CLASSROOM  
FAVORITES

A Perma-Bound Production

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

Matty lives with the Seer, cleans house, gardens, and shares cooking duties. The old man teaches him to sauté onion before cooking rabbit. At evening, the boy slips away to Forest at the edge of Village, where vines sometimes strangled wayfarers. Nearby lives Mentor, a teacher nicknamed "Rosy" for his red birthmark, and his daughter, Jean, on whom Matty has a crush. Matty lies to Ramon about having to retrieve a message. He had hoped to attain the true name Messenger. After handling a frog, he returns toward the marketplace to the sound of keening.

### Chapter 2

Ramon reports that Gatherer tried to return the previous night, when Forest overtook and strangled him. Twelve villagers have begun keening in a ritual to mourn the loss. After six years of traveling paths, Matty has never received a Warning from Forest, such as the puncture that the Seer received for carrying advice to his original village; Matty senses that he is special to Forest. While fishing for salmon, Ramon boasts about having a Gaming Machine. The morning of Gatherer's burial, women comfort the widow while Jean sells bread in the marketplace. The museum displays relics of Village—the red sled by which Leader arrived and the history of Seer, whom enemies blinded. Leader suspects something wrong in Forest, where a frog suffers a stiff back leg.

### Chapter 3

Matty suggests that he and Seer might enjoy a Gaming Machine. Seer prefers being read to. Matty considers watching the next Trade Mart, but Seer thinks it would be too painful. Villagers keep no secrets. Matty recalls

his own background—living in a hovel with a brother and a brutal mother. Seer helps Matty give up deceit by keeping him home from school to work in the garden.

### Chapter 4

Matty likes visiting Leader, who owns one whole floor of books. Leader was the villager who came on the sled.

When a river barge delivered his books, he knew he was no longer a hunted man. He helped make Village a more agreeable place to live. Leader remembers that Matty joined Village six years ago and asks about the supply of salmon and trout in the river. Matty takes most of the day to deliver messages about a community meeting to decide on closing Village to outsiders. On trips to his former home, he has learned that his mother has died and that his brother is a stranger to him. Seer accuses the villagers of selfishness, and fears that Mentor, head of the faction, may have traded.

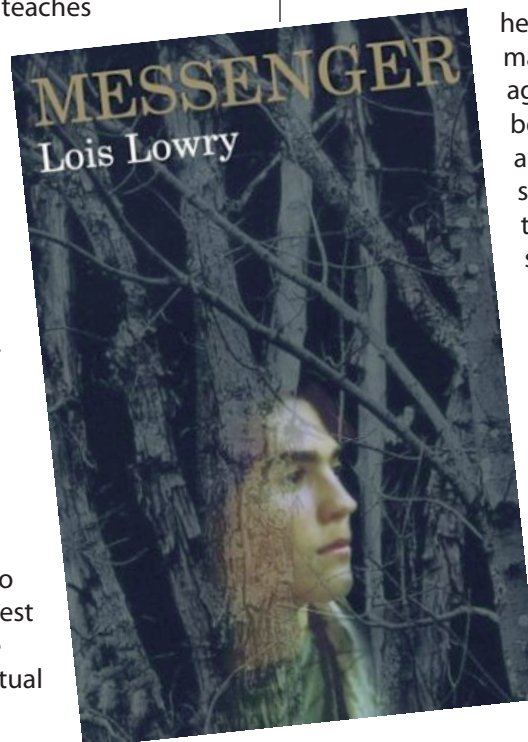
### Chapter 5

Matty regrets the death of his dog Branch two years before. Jean reports the death of two puppies and the sickness of the mother dog and remaining pup. Matty

feels a shock from touching the pup. Jean reports that Mentor is attending the meeting; his real purpose is to court Stocktender's widow. After sending Jean to fetch yarrow and other healing herbs, Matty places his hands on the dogs and wills them to survive. The dogs revive, but Matty is exhausted. He recalls feeling a healing power in his body while he tried to bury the mangled frog. Before he could amputate the frog's dead leg with a sharp rock, the power restored it to health. At midday, Matty finds himself weeping—something he never does—and feels himself being restored. Then he sleeps, dreaming of becoming a healer.

### Chapter 6

In late summer, Ramon reports arrivals to Village. Matty and Seer are welcoming the newcomers when Mentor's group chants a rejection of outsiders. Leader promises



welcome, fair treatment, and an end to persecution. Mentor seems taller and his birthmark lighter. The Trade Mart opens the next night; three days later, the meeting will vote on the petition to close Village. In recent times, trading has taken on secrecy. When Matty states his intention to see the trading, the Seer warns him to watch and listen, but not get involved in the trading.

### Chapter 7

In early evening, Trademaster begins the session when some people lead away a weeping woman. Mentor seems kind as always, but he seems to have lost weight. Matty notices that most of the people coming to trade are empty-handed, unlike in the past. When Trademaster opens the trading, Mentor uncharacteristically shoves aside other traders and shouts to be the first one called. Later that night, Matty recounts to Seer what happens next: Trademaster asks, "Trade for what?," and Mentor replies, "Same as always." When Trademaster asks, "Trade away what?," Mentor whispers the answer, then seems relieved when Trademaster appears to grant his request. Over and over this scene is repeated with the mostly empty-handed participants. This is a big departure from previous Trade Marts, as is the tenseness of the atmosphere. The only one who is not granted a trade is Ramon's mother, who wants to trade for a fur jacket. One woman, ordinarily kind and gentle, trades happily for a Gaming Machine, then mocks her crippled husband for being slow as they are leaving. Matty also recalls that Mentor's birthmark has disappeared.

### Chapter 8

Matty visits Jean to fetch his puppy. She reports that Mentor has traded his deepest self for Stocktender's widow. Jean remarks that trades are irreversible. Matty ponders repairing Mentor's soul. At Leader's house, Leader welcomes the pup and recalls that his old community allowed no pets. Matty confides that he would like to trade for a Gaming Machine. He tells Leader about the trades. Leader names the pup Frolic.

### Chapter 9

On the day of the meeting, Matty talks with a newcomer about how the Seer adjusted to blindness. The woman brought only her son Vladik with her from home and fears that she can't reunite with her sister and little ones. Jean worries that Mentor no longer loves literature. Matty has a feeling of doom.

### Chapter 10

At the meeting, Matty observes changes in villagers.

Ramon's mother is gruff with her sick children. Citizens predict that newcomers will use up the fish, overrun the schools, and introduce foreign dialects. The Seer rebuts their arguments with examples from his own rescue and that of Matty. Leader regrets village selfishness. The vote will close Village in three weeks. Seer tells Matty that Leader sees beyond and that the Seer's daughter, Kira, has a special gift. The old man asks Matty to fetch Kira. Matty promises to leave the next day.

### Chapter 11

Matty carries the message to post on all the paths in Forest. Leader confides that he knows about Matty's healing power and urges the boy to wait for a true need. A surge passes from Leader to Matty. Leader warns that Forest is thickening and tells him to remain in Village. Matty insists on returning for Kira. Leader moans as he looks beyond. Matty suggests that Leader merge gifts with Kira. Late in the day after a storm, Matty is packing when Jean arrives. She brings bread and reports that Ramon and his sister are ill. Herbalist fears an epidemic. Matty ponders how to combat Ramon's fever without losing the energy to fetch Kira. Jean notices that the wall hanging shows Forest thickening. She kisses Matty goodbye.

### Chapter 12

Matty and Frolic sleep on soft forest moss. He posts messages before reaching Kira's village. Forest seems hostile and decaying. Frolic fears the dark.

### Chapter 13

Matty recalls being a fierce little boy and loving Kira, a motherless girl. Two years earlier, he brought Seer to visit Kira, who recognized his stone amulet. Kira escaped execution by dyeing threads with herbs and flowers to weave into pictures. Matty calculates the time of his journey and plans to arrive before Village closes. Kira greets him and reports that she has learned to read. While Matty eats soup and bread, he thinks about healing Kira's twisted leg.

### Chapter 14

Kira refuses to be healed. Matty demonstrates his gift by puncturing his leg with a knife and making the wound disappear. Kira exhibits the mystery of her futuristic embroidery, which pictures her entering Forest with Matty and Frolic. The scene shows Mentor directing the building of a wall. Matty and Kira resolve to depart the next morning.

**Chapter 15**

Kira turns her back on the craft supplies in her cottage. In Village, Leader reports to Seer that the couple are on their way. Outside, Mentor shouts rudely to wall builders. Ten days remain before the wall goes up. Leader conceals from Seer that Forest intends to destroy the travelers.

**Chapter 16**

Matty tells Kira about Jean. Kira stops at the firelight to examine cuts and punctures in her feet from hostile roots. The next morning, Matty must cut brush to find the path. Sap burns his skin; a pungent odor afflicts them. Leader knows that more hardships await the travelers.

**Chapter 17**

The next afternoon, Matty suffers from poisoned welts. The pond is stagnant and the air clammy and cold. They tie themselves together with a vine to ease through mud. Kira loses her shoes in the muck and suffers lacerated feet. That night, they reach the center of Forest. Matty sinks into delusions of Village. The smell inhibits their breathing. Matty kills a viper with his knife. Kira embroiders a picture of Leader coming to rescue them.

**Chapter 18**

Seer digs a garden for Kira. He knows the truth about the dangers in Forest. Leader fears that the wall builders will close borders early. When Seer touches his wall hanging, he feels knots and smells death.

**Chapter 19**

The next morning, Kira is weak and gravely wounded, lacerated by Forest. Matty's nose bleeds; his arms are ungainly from swelling. He awakens Kira and asks her to embroider a picture that will meet Leader halfway. After two days on the trail, Leader suffers wounds from Forest.

**Chapter 20**

Frolic is dead. Kira feels Leader coming to them. Kira and Leader communicate. Leader instructs her to ask Matty for help. Matty rolls into the mud and is awaiting death when his fingers begin to vibrate.

**Chapter 21**

Matty feels power surge through him and into the ground and everything connected with Village and Forest. In a vision, he sees Kira is healed; Ramon recovered from fever; Leader released from a vine; Mentor, his birthmark and hunch restored, waving to Jean and spouting poetry; the wall-builders leaving their work.

Matty watches as Seer finds the tapestry restored to smoothness; he sees the newcomers speaking happily in different tongues, and the scarred woman standing proudly next to her son. He sees Village restored and happy. As death claims him and his spirit floats free from his body, Matty understands what Seer meant: Forest was only an illusion of fear and deceit. Matt "lets go" with a feeling of peace. Meanwhile, Leader joins the now-healed Kira and gives Matty his true name—Healer. Accompanied by Kira, Leader carries Matty's corpse to Village as the sound of keening begins.

**Timeline**

<b>Eight years earlier</b>	Leader arrives by sled with the infant Gabe.
<b>Shortly after</b>	A river barge delivers Leader's books.
<b>Six years before story begins</b>	Matty begins exploring Forest.
<b>Later</b>	Matty's abusive mother dies.
<b>Two years before the story begins</b>	The dog Branch dies of old age. Matty brings the Seer to visit Kira.
<b>One year before the story begins</b>	Villagers vote down a petition to close the borders
<b>One day before the story begins</b>	Forest strangles Gatherer. Matty and Seer share a cottage in Village.
<b>Story opening</b>	Matty slips away to Forest and heals a mangled frog.
<b>Before dark</b>	Matty returns toward the marketplace to the sound of keening for Gatherer.
<b>Evening</b>	Ramon and Matty fish the river for salmon.
<b>Later</b>	Leader suspects something wrong in Forest.
<b>Next morning</b>	With a healing touch, Matty cures a dog and her pup.
<b>Later</b>	Exhausted, Matty weeps and dreams of becoming a healer.
<b>Midday</b>	A woman and her son Vladik arrive at Village, but leave her sister and little ones behind. Mentor no longer loves literature.
<b>Late summer</b>	When Mentor's group chants a refusal of outsiders,
<b>Shortly after</b>	

**Later** Leader promises welcome, fair treatment, and an end to per secution. Seers urges Matty not to get involved in trading.

**Next night** At the Trade Mart, Mentor trades in secret. A woman gets a Gaming Machine. Ramon's mother fails to trade for a fur jacket.

**Next day** Jean reports that Mentor has traded his deepest self for Stocktender's widow.

**Later** Leader names Matty's puppy Frolic.

**Two days later** When local people vote to close Village in three weeks, the Seer asks Matty to fetch Kira.

**Next day** Leader urges Matty to wait for a true need for his healing power.

**Late in the day** Jean reports that Ramon and his sister are ill. The wall hanging shows Forest thickening.

**That evening** On the way, Matty and Frolic sleep on soft moss.

**Next day** Kira refuses to have her twisted leg healed.

**Next morning** Kira and Matty set out for Village.

**Meanwhile** Leader reports to the Seer that the couple are on their way.

**That night** By firelight, Kira examines cuts and punctures in her feet from hostile roots.

**Next morning** Matty must cut brush to find the path.

**Later** Sap burns his skin; a pungent odor afflicts them. meanwhile Leader knows that more hard ships await the travelers.

**Next afternoon** Matty suffers from poisoned welts.

**That night** When they reach the center of Forest, Matty kills a viper with his knife. Kira embroiders a picture of Leader coming to rescue them.

**Meanwhile** Leader fears that the wall builders will close borders

**Next morning** early. Matty asks Kira to embroider a meeting with Leader halfway through Forest. Leader instructs her to ask Matty for help. Healing Kira and restoring Village causes Matty's death.

**Shortly after** Leader names Matty Healer and carries his corpse to Village.

### Author Sketch

Norwegian-American novelist Lois Ann Hammersberg Lowry excels at existentialist fables for young readers. The second of three children of Katharine Gordon Landis Hammer-sberg and army oral surgeon Major Robert E. Hammersberg of La Crosse, Wisconsin, she was born into an Episcopalian household in Honolulu, Hawaii, on March 20, 1937. Her parents named her after two paternal aunts. At age four, she survived the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, an attack that sent her father to the Pacific island of Tinian and to a hospital ship for the duration of World War II. Until 1945, she, her elder sister, Helen, and their mother sheltered at Lowry's grandmother's home near an Amish enclave on College Street in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where Lowry's brother, Jon, was born. The grandfather, a cook-domestic named Fleta Jordan, and a fourth-grade teacher helped Lowry cope with war fears and separation until the family reunion in an American compound in Tokyo in 1948.



While Lowry attended Meguro Junior High in the Shibuya ward of Tokyo and at Curtis High School on Staten Island, New York, she read classic fiction and filled notebooks with original fiction and verse. In 1952, she studied at the Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn Heights. On December 6, 1962, her sister, Helen Boyd, died at age 28 of cancer in Washington, D.C. The loss influenced the author's characterization in *A Summer for Dying*, a novel about a girl realizing the imminent death of her sister. Her brother, Dr. Jon R. Hammersberg, became a physician in Staunton, Virginia.

In her sophomore year at Brown University, the author quit school and married naval officer Donald Grey Lowry, father of their children, Alix, Benjamin, Grey, and Kristin. The family lived in California, Connecticut,

Florida, South Carolina, and Massachusetts, where Donald entered Harvard Law School. While residing in Portland, Maine, in 1972, Lowry completed a B.A. in English literature from the University of Southern Maine. During graduate coursework, she studied photography. After a divorce, she settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she worked as a free-lance photographer and fiction writer, beginning with the eight-volume Anastasia Krupnik series in 1979. In 1980, Lowry wrote the semi-autobiographical novel *Autumn Street*, which focuses on Pennsylvania life during World War II.

Lowry established a steady output of 33 novels in 30 years. She also submitted articles, photos, and short fiction to *Downeast*, *Redbook*, and *Yankee*, and composed a photo memoir, *Looking Back* (1988). Her son, Ben, became a fighter pilot during the Gulf War and died in a jet plane crash and explosion in Texas on January 30, 1995. One of her daughters suffers from neurological disease. She still lives in Cambridge with her long-time partner, Martin Small. She enjoys grandmotherhood, needlework, and gardening during summers at a 19th-century farmhouse in Sanbornton, New Hampshire. Her collected papers reside in the Kerlan Collection at the University of Minnesota.

### Critic's Corner

Lowry earned respect from the beginning of her career for honoring human connections. A writer in the same class as Robert Cormier, Cynthia Rylant, Gary Paulsen, and M.E. Kerr, Lowry tackles such esoteric and humanistic topics as survival, community, treachery, and loyalty to self. For her compassion and appreciation of young talents she won the Children's Book Committee Child Study Award and a 1990 Newbery Medal for *Number the Stars*, a suspenseful historical novel about Danish children involved in the Resistance to Nazi occupation during World War II. Other awards include an ALA Notable Book, an IRA Children's Literature Award, an American Book Award nomination, a *Horn Book* citation, a Golden Kite Award, a National Jewish Libraries Award, a National Jewish Book Award, and the Sidney Taylor Award.

The 1994 Newbery Award for *The Giver* brought thunderous approval from readers, parents, teachers, and librarians who welcomed the dystopian fable for its clarity, suspense, and classic control. She wrote the book during the last years of her parents' lives, when memory loss and pain engulfed them. To questions about the ambiguous ending, she replied, "Those of you who

hoped that I would stand here tonight and reveal the 'true' ending, the 'right' interpretation of the ending, will be disappointed. There isn't one. There's a right one for each of us, and it depends on our own beliefs, our own hopes." The book found a place in parochial school curricula and as a popular bar mitzvah gift. She followed *The Giver* with the other two books in a trilogy: *Gathering Blue* (2000), and *Messenger* (2004).

### Other Works by Lois Lowry

*A Summer to Die*, 1977  
*Find a Stranger, Say Goodbye*, 1978  
*Anastasia Krupnik*, 1979  
*Autumn Street*, 1980  
*Anastasia Again!*, 1981  
*Anastasia at Your Service*, 1982  
*Taking Care of Terrific*, 1983  
*The One Hundredth Thing about Carolina*, 1983  
*Us and Uncle Fraud*, 1984  
*Anastasia, Ask Your Analyst*, 1984  
*Anastasis on Her Own*, 1985  
*Switcharound*, 1985  
*Anastasia Has the Answers*, 1986  
*Rabble Starkey*, 1987  
*Anastasia's Chosen Career*, 1987  
*All About Sam*, 1988  
*Number the Stars*, 1989  
*Your Move, J. P.!*, 1990  
*Anastasia at This Address*, 1991  
*Attaboy Sam!*, 1992  
*The Giver*, 1993  
*Anastasia Absolutely*, 1995  
*See You Around, Sam!*, 1996  
*Stay! Keeper's Story*, 1997  
*Looking Back*, 1988  
*Zooman Sam*, 1999  
*Gathering Blue*, 2000  
*Gooney Bird Greene*, 2002  
*Silent Boy*, 2003  
*Messenger*, 2004  
*Gossamer*, 2006  
*Gooney Bird and the Room Mother*, 2006  
*Gooney the Fabulous*, 2007

### Related Reading

Avi, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*  
 Stephen Vincent Benet, "The Devil and Daniel Webster"  
 Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*  
 Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*  
 Robert Frost, "Out, Out—"

Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster*  
Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe*  
James Hurst, "The Scarlet Ibis"  
Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"  
Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"  
Lois Lowry, *The Giver*  
Walter Dean Myers, *Monster*  
Robert Newton Peck, *A Day No Pigs Would Die*  
Conrad Richter, *The Light in the Forest*  
Luis J. Rodriguez, *Always Running*  
Cynthia Rylant, *Missing May*  
Mark Twain, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg"  
Kathryn Forbes, *Mama's Bank Account*  
John Van Druten, Kathryn Forbes, *I Remember Mama*  
Jane Wagner, *J.T.*  
Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*  
Ruth White, *Belle Prater's Boy*  
Ron Woods, *The Hero*

## Bibliography

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Carter, Betty. "Review: *Messenger*," *Horn Book* 80, no. 3 (June 2006): 332-333.  
Hastler, Mary. "Lois Lowry Receives 2007 Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement," *Young Adult Library Services* 5, no. 3 (April 2007): 24-25.  
Odean, Kathleen. "Nonconformists," *Teacher Librarian*, 32, no. 1 (October 2004): 18.  
Orlando, Marie. "Review: *Messenger*," *School Library Journal* 50, no. 4 (April 2004): 156-157.  
"Review: *Messenger*," *Kirkus Reviews* 72, no. 7 (1 2004 April): 333.  
"Review: *Messenger*," *Library Media Connection* 23, no. 3 (December 2004): 70-72.  
"Review: *Messenger*," *Publishers Weekly* 251, no. 7 (16 February 2004): 173.  
Rochman, Hazel. "Review: *Messenger*," *Book Links* 13, no. 5 (May 2004): 15.  
Silvey, Anita. "The Unpredictable Lois Lowry," *School Library Journal* 35, no. 6 (June 2007, 38-42).  
Yazzie, Jo Ann. "Review: *Messenger*," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 48, no. 1 (Sept. 2004): 80.

## General Objectives

1. To discuss the formation of community
2. To characterize a cautionary tale
3. To identify flashbacks as evidence of regret
4. To tell the relationship between citizen and individual
5. To contrast types of risk

6. To note the value of honesty
7. To read aloud examples of aphorism, advice, superstition, tradition, dialogue, and magical realism
8. To study the source of metaphysical powers
9. To give examples of social dysfunction and bigotry
10. To explain the universality of death, mourning, and fostering

### Specific Objectives

1. To describe the merging of villagers from various backgrounds
2. To recount how and why Matty becomes Seer's foster son
3. To discuss public opinion of outsiders
4. To explain how the forest symbolizes malevolence
5. To account for villagers' rejection of Kira
6. To characterize the decay caused by trading at the mart
7. To list incidents illustrating nostalgia, hope, regret, and longing
8. To evaluate changes in Mentor and Matty
9. To account for the frog's recovery
10. To assess the roles of Jean, Ramon, and Vladik's mother
11. To analyze the symbolism of a stagnant pond, poisonous sap, and stench
12. To contrast the arrivals of Leader, Seer, Vladik, and Matty to Village
13. To project how Jean, Kira, Leader, and the Seer will mourn Matty

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Lois Lowry's style, present the following terms and applications to her fable:

**Cautionary tale:** a brief, action-centered narrative derived from oral tradition and focusing on a loosely plotted action intended to alert the unwary to a danger or threat. Lowry's cautionary tale reveals the hardening of hearts in a formerly open community that no longer welcomes outsiders. At stake are more refugees from persecution, including Vladik's family and people whom Matty, Leader, and the Seer once knew in the old village. The conclusion implies that Matty is willing to sacrifice himself by using his unique powers to restore community generosity.

**Fable:** a brief, elementary moral story using animals or mono-dimensional human characters to demonstrate human foibles. Lowry employs simplicity to limit the

cast of characters and the variables in her overview of human greed, which slowly overtakes individuals and strangles a village.

**Symbolic name:** a name derived from an allusion or a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship. In *Village*, Leader confers titles on people to honor unique talents, particularly Mentor the schoolteacher, Seer the wise old man, and Messenger, the go-between who risks his life to carry edicts and data to outlying villages on the other side of Forest.

**Universality:** a quality or theme that applies to all people at all times. *Messenger* exhibits universality in the human situations—widowhood, orphaning, crippling, blindness, loneliness—that limit individuals and in the human failings that strip Village of its charity.

## Cross-Curricular Sources

For related reading and more information about *Messenger*, fable, cautionary tales, aliens, and dystopia, consult these sources:

### Novels

*Belle Prater's Boy*, Ruth White  
*A Day No Pigs Would Die*, Robert Newton Peck  
*The Good Earth*, Pearl Buck  
*The Light in the Forest*, Conrad Richter  
*Missing May*, Cynthia Rylant  
*So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Yoko Kawashima Watkins  
*Something Wicked This Way Comes*, Ray Bradbury

### Plays

*J.T.*, Jane Wagner  
*I Remember Mama*, John Van Druten, Kathryn Forbes (adapted from *Mama's Bank Account*, by Kathryn Forbes)

### Poems

"The New Colossus," Emma Lazarus  
 "Out, Out—," Robert Frost

### Short Stories

"The Lottery," Shirley Jackson  
 "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," Mark Twain  
 "The Scarlet Ibis," James Hurst

### Videos

*Ellen Foster*, Hallmark Hall of Fame, 1999  
*J.T.*, CBS, 1969  
*The Lottery*, Landsburg, 1996

*I Remember Mama*, RKO Radio Pictures, 1948  
*Places in the Heart*, Delphi II Productions, 1984  
*The Secret of NIMH*, Aurora, 1982  
*Something Wicked This Way Comes*, Bryna Productions, 1983  
*THX-1138*, American Zoetrope, 1971

### Audio CD (unabridged)

*Messenger* (read by David Morse), Listening Library, 2006

### Boxed Set

*The World of Lois Lowry*, Delacorte, 2006

### Large Print

*Messenger*, Thorndike, 2004

### Spanish translation

*El Mensajero*, Lectorum, 2006

## The Importance of Setting

Lowry's fable uses a sense of place as a means of separating selfish from great-hearted people. By giving no names to villages or the forest, she leaves open the application of her moral to any town, state, or nation. The simple allotment of tasks—Fisherman, Gatherer, Herbalist, Mentor, Trademaster, Messenger, Stocktender, Seer, Healer—implies a folkloric backdrop similar to peasant stories of the Middle Ages such as Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1385). The assembly of all citizens for meetings and trading sessions creates a sense of unity of action and purpose. By dividing the populace into keepers, chanters, and wall builders, she enhances a sense of disunity as a selfish faction moves away from hospitality and shared action toward an "us versus them" mentality.

After Matty departs from the Leader to Forest, the setting develops the distant place into a fount of evil. After an overnight sojourn at Kira's cottage, Matty sets out with her for the return trek. Like fingers, roots and thorns conceal the path, tear at Matty's arms, and puncture Kira's feet. More debilitating are foul odors, miasma, poisonous sap, and a viper that engirths Matty's leg. To escape the immediacy of a killer forest, Kira uses her embroidery to look at a welcoming setting ahead and to summon Leader to rescue the travelers. The orchestration of Leader's rescue of Kira and Matty, the Seer's preparation of a garden for his daughter, and Matty's healing of Village overlay three settings—Village in the past, Village in the present, and the forest between. By the end of the journey, the setting has freed Leader from misgivings, reunited Kira with her father, instilled

grief in keepers' hearts, and elevated Matty to a messianic savior.

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Lois Lowry's *Messenger* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- community
- reclamation
- change
- loss
- charity
- memories
- refugees
- hospitality
- synergy
- materialism
- disorder
- risk
- self-sacrifice
- martyrdom

### Motifs

- family reunion
- conservative factions
- the leader's burden
- realization of talents

## Meaning Study

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the fable. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. "Don't joke about the trading." (Chapter 1, p. 2)  
*(From its first mention, the purpose of the Trade Mart and the secrecy surrounding its effect on villagers builds suspense, Lowry's most powerful literary dynamic. Instead of revealing one-for-one trades, episodes imply that people lose elements of their humanity by bargaining for physical beauty, marriage, clothing, and a Gaming Machine. Seer elicits the effects on traders by questioning Matty closely after he returns home.)*
2. "It's all an illusion." (Chapter 1, p. 5)  
*(From the introduction of the Seer in Chapter 1, Lowry establishes that he visualizes human need and behaviors in philosophical rather than everyday*

*terms. Matty, who is just a boy, has no idea how a forest can be an illusion. The text leaves the question unanswered until the final scene, when Leader and Matty combine powers to expunge fear, inhumanity, disease, and death from the populace of Village.)*

3. The people needed Matty, too. (Chapter 1, p. 9)  
*(Lowry's fable describes Matty as young and inexperienced, yet valuable to Seer and the Village. Leader and villagers depend on him to travel Forest to deliver messages to friends, family, and future refugees living in distant places where unhappiness prevails. The worth of Matty as a trusted message carrier establishes that even children have essential uses to community.)*
4. "It sounds like a good-sized group." (Chapter 2, p. 13)  
*(Throughout the fable, the Seer amazes Matty by using his remaining senses to overcome blindness. Lowry notes, "He knew each fence post, each cross-road, each voice and smell and shadow." By careful hearing, he discerns that twelve people mourn Gatherer. He surprises Matty by differentiating the keepers as eight women and four men.)*
5. Leader could see beyond the shadows but was not certain what he saw. (Chapter 2, p. 19)  
*(Lowry creates irony out of incomplete visions. Several characters—the Seer, Leader, Kira, and Matty—contribute to knowledge of the future, but a complete image requires synergy. The collaboration of the farsighted characters results in rescue of Village from the dangers that lurk in "the shadows.")*
6. "You know, ... when you win a candy, a bell rings and colored lights blink." (Chapter 3, p. 23)  
*(The author makes an issue of readiness by depicting Matty's yearning for trivial pleasures doled out of a Gaming Machine. The description of playing the game and receiving rewards describes common gambling devices, which drop coins in a slot, play music, and flash lights to indicate even the smallest win. The Seer tries to divert Matty from such shallow amusement.)*
7. "That's why we have the Museum, Matty, to remind us of how we came, and why: to start fresh, and begin a new place from what we had learned and carried from the old." (Chapter 5, p. 29)  
*(Lowry describes the museum as a repository of relics and history. The exhibits remind people of their advance from pre-civilization and through struggles*



and wars to more contentment and greater awareness of human accomplishment.)

8. Village had been created out of the opposite: selflessness. (Chapter 5, p. 34)  
*(The fable notes how public opinion can swing diametrically from a strong humanism or unifying outlook to its opposite, from hospitality to outsiders to distrust of foreign dialects. The result of complacency and paranoia is the danger of closed borders.)*
9. The people of Village prided themselves on the welcome, many of them leaving their regular work to go and be part of it. (Chapter 6, p. 48)  
*(Seer exhibits the long-term attitude of Village to extend hospitality to refugees fleeing persecution, pain, and exhaustion to build new lives for themselves.)*
10. "Leader? Do you think two gifts could meet?" (Chapter 11, p. 96)  
*(At a pivotal point in the text, Matty displays divergent thinking, an ability to look beyond custom and habit to new combinations of solutions. By suggesting the merger of powers, he illustrates the strength of community—joining the talents of individuals into a single force for good.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important. Be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the fable.

### Structure

1. Why does the action conclude with keening?  
*(Mourning serves in place of a celebration of the unselfish village Healer who rescues Kira and Ramon as well as Frolic. Because keening is a community acknowledgement of loss, Lowry indicates that villagers return to the unity they displayed in the beginning for Gatherer. With voices sounding together, they respect and honor Matty for his self-sacrifice, and welcome his body home to Village.)*

### Exposition

2. How does Matty serve Seer?  
*(Matty, Seer's foster son, serves as the old man's companion and eyes. Matty picks fresh lettuce and basil for dinner, fries salmon in oil, and serves their plates. In the evenings he reads aloud from challenging*

*texts like Moby Dick. When Village threatens to close its borders, Matty surpasses his contributions in the expedition to rescue Kira and reunite her with her father.)*

### Flashbacks

3. How does Lowry connect *Messenger* to previous book installments?  
*(Through flashback, the author pictures Seer's blinding by enemies, recuperation among kind rescuers, Kira's decision to stay in the cottage, and Matty's arrival at Village. The glimpses of the past help readers appreciate Seer's healing and his function as foster father and mentor to Matty. The bond between foster father and son grows during Seer's civilizing of Matty and his guidance from lying and deceiving to positive behaviors, particularly the responsibility of being the village messenger. Past events also explain why Kira lives apart from her father and why she is willing to rejoin him in Village.)*

### Characterization

4. Which characters change in outlook and behavior?  
*(Lowry contrasts change in two literary foils, Mentor and Matty. The schoolteacher, who was once kind and considerate of village students and the children of newcomers, becomes obsessed with changing his physical appearance to impress Stocktender's widow. Mentor makes deals to extend his height and rid his face of the crimson birthmark. Matty notices at the Trade Mart that Mentor pushes to the front and demands the first trade, which requires the removal of the red patch that earns Mentor the nickname "Rosy." At the same time that Matty observes his elders making deals with Trademaster, he begins to mature and develop his own uniqueness. At first, he recoils from the tingle that indicates his healing powers. By the fable's end, Matty willingly sacrifices himself by healing Kira, Frolic, Leader, and the entire village.)*

### Action

5. How does Forest threaten?  
*(Leader and Matty are aware of an increasing aura of danger in Forest, which strangles Gatherer to death. On the journey to retrieve Kira, Matty finds the air fouled with decay and a familiar log crumbling beneath him. On his return journey with Kira, the paths choke with brush and the pond stagnates, depriving the journeyers of fresh water. Mud sucks at Kira's shoes and coats Matty's feet. Puncture wounds fester, and sap poisons Matty's arms and hands.*

*Both travelers require cloths over their mouths and noses to filter foul air. In the distance, Leader surveys the scene and realizes that Forest intends to kill Kira and Matty.)*

### Interpretation

6. How does the petition alter Village?

*(Leader suspects a dangerous shift in villagers when Mentor presents a petition calling for a new vote on closing borders to outsiders. The rejection of refugees who speak different dialects suggests hostility to human differences. Materialism creates paranoia that Village will run out of food and classrooms to hold refugee children. When Vladik and his mother arrive with a group of newcomers, rude chanting counters the welcome that Seer and Matty extend to the weary travelers. After the second vote closes the borders within three weeks, the messenger's last journey takes on new meaning for Leader, Seer, and Kira.)*

### Details

7. What details suggest community cooperation?

*(Lowry dots the text with indications of unity and cooperation. Seer finds his way around Village and lives unharmed while diagnosing mental health in residents. Herbalist treats Ramon and his sister and fears an epidemic may threaten health for all. Welcomers offer food and shelter to newcomers. Mentor introduces rough-hewn children to the spirit of community by teaching them courtesy, literature, and language. Villagers respect Leader, who nurtures individual talents and assigns titles to adults based on their uniqueness. In the final lines, residents join voices to mourn the passing of Matty, whom they honor for self-sacrifice.)*

### Theme

8. How does the fable reflect current issues?

*(Lowry's fable surveys the materialism and insularity of conservative Americans who reject newcomers, especially non-Christians and people of color. She rebuts excuses for rejecting refugees—overrunning schools, overtaxing resources, and introducing foreign languages. Her depiction of the chanters characterizes conservative pressure groups that raise shrill opposition of amnesty to people in need. The building of a wall mirrors President George W. Bush's intent to wall off the Mexican border to prevent illegal aliens from moving north.)*

### Tone

9. What is Lowry's tone?

*(The author stresses the positive aspects of a blended community. She pictures the rescue of Leader and the reclamation of Seer and Matty and their contributions to Village. She reminds the reader that older citizens have histories of persecution and terror. She cites as evidence of suppression Leader's lack of a pet in childhood and Kira's illiteracy in a village that denies education to females. Leader recalls his near-death flight through snow on the red sled and regrets that villagers have lost their former cohesion. He wants to revive the community's hospitality toward desperate refugees.)*

### Mood

10. What does Matty's death contribute to Village?

*(Matty's sacrifice of his life heals and redeems Village, restoring it to unity, peace, and love. His death also makes clear that the ultimate result of selfishness, fear, and hatred is death, both symbolic and actual. The somber conclusion reminds readers that evil exacts a price and that positive change requires sacrifice. Matty's retreat to the mud in Forest and his exertion of healing power saves Kira and Leader. At a distance, Matty's powers reunite Seer with his daughter, heal Ramon, and restore Village to its initial ideal of refuge for outsiders. The sound of keening indicates mourning and sadness, but also honor for Matty's self-sacrifice. Unified once more, the people can now maintain Village's restoration to its former altruism.)*

## Across the Curriculum

### Foreign Language

1. Create models of *santons de Provence*, figurines from France that picture villagers in typical dress. Choose from shepherd, baker, dairier, winemaker, bricklayer, physician, carter, harvester, blacksmith, nun, chimney sweep, beekeeper, cobbler, gardener, cooper, launderer, gardener, bargee, soapmaker, waiter, firefighter, mail carrier, mechanic, glazier, potter, artist, priest, goatherder, basketmaker, apothecary, butcher, miller, peddler, spinner, knitter, nurse, nanny, and weaver.

### Cinema

1. On cels of a film storyboard, place the following stage props where they will have the most impact: fishing pole, knife, stone amulet, basil, heart drawn in the dust, wall materials, thick trade book, dismem-

bered rabbit, knife, viper, frog, loom, wall hanging, dying dog, bread, Gaming Machine, salmon, messages, face cloth, shoes, stick, yarn, needle, books, beets, clematis, carrots, soup, red sled, circular stairs, vines, kite, musical instrument, river barge, backpack, Branch's grave, herbs, *Moby Dick*, dye, and owl.

- Describe aspects of the fable that are more suited to radio, film, tableau, illustration, storytelling, and pageant than to stage, for example, flashbacks to the Seer's recovery, Leader's shimmering arm, muck in the stagnant pond, Gatherer's mangled body, keening, Gabe in Mentor's classroom, the anger of Ramon's mother, Herbalist treating Ramon and his sister, vanishing birthmark, quarantined house, the surge from Leader to Matty, Vladik's arrival with his mother, and petitioners chanting at newcomers.
- View various films featuring village and community life, e.g., *Watership Down*, *Except for Me and Thee*, *Little Women*, *Silas Marner*, *The Education of Little Tree*, *Ellen Foster*, *Cross Creek*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The Good Earth*, *And Now Miguel*, *The Secret of NIMH*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Places in the Heart*. Discuss why filmmakers focus on the effects of persecution, struggle, journeys, threat, and exclusion on ambitious people.

### Speech

- Describe in a short speech the effects of isolation, anticipation, disease, frustration, loss, failed ambitions, missing parents, memories, danger, education, and disagreement on characters in the fable. How does Leader ennoble people who appear to have failed? Why does the author suggest that all people have talents?
- Outline a brief talk on difficult journeys in folklore and literature. Mention True Son's return in *The Light in the Forest*, sailing with pirates in *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, the wanderings of Johnny Appleseed, Laura Ingalls's narrow escapes in the *Little House on the Prairie* series, Jim Hawkins's escape in *Treasure Island*, Jo March's sojourn in New York in *Little Women*, the voyage of Sinbad the Sailor, the desert adventure in *The Little Prince*, Snow White's residence with the Seven Dwarfs, and Robin Hood's return from the Crusades.

### Research

- Create a bulletin board listing major contributors to cautionary tales and fables. Include Aesop, Horace, Joel Chandler Harris, Jean de la Fontaine, Washington Irving, Rudyard Kipling, Mary Hunter Austin, T.S. Eliot, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, George Orwell, D.H. Lawrence, Anne Bodart, James Thurber, Gayle Ross, Lois Lowry, J.J. Reneaux, and Joseph Bruchac. Match authors with these classic stories: *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, "The Tar Baby Story," *Animal Farm*, "Rip Van Winkle," "The City Mouse and the Country Mouse," *Just-So Stories*, "The Hare and the Tortoise," *The Giver*, "The Rocking Horse Winner," *The Little Prince*, "Gluscabi and the Wind Eagle," "How Turtle's Back Was Cracked," "Why Alligator Hates Dog," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."
- Divide the class into small groups to list identifiable parts of the fable and to place them on a Freytag diagram. Include exposition of characters, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion. How does Matty serve a variety of roles—foster son, greeter, orphan, student, fisherman, friend, messenger, reader, cook, observer, reporter, rescuer, traveler, escapee, brother, fatherless son, snake killer, savior, dog trainer, secret keeper, and healer? In which part of the Freytag diagram does each role belong?

### Psychology

- Characterize relationships in the fable, particularly husband/wife, foster son/foster father, healer/patient, father/daughter, widower/widow, reader/listener, pet owner/dog, mother/son, teacher/student, parent/distant child, trademaster/bargainer, leader/petitioner, orphan/rescuer, and newcomer/wall builder. Which pair shares the most trust? warmth? disagreement? mutual faith? needs? hope for happiness and success?
- Compose a short outline for an oral report on these character roles: Trademaster, Messenger, Healer, Seer, Mentor, Leader, Gatherer, Fisherman, Stocktender, and Herbalist. Determine which roles have the greatest influence on Village structure, survival, and values. Why does Leader rank Healer above Messenger?

**Reading**

1. Read aloud other literary descriptions of dilemmas. Include James Hurst's "The Scarlet Ibis," Stephen Vincent Benet's "The Devil and Daniel Webster," Jane Wagner's *J.T.*, Luis J. Rodriguez's *Always Running*, Kaye Gibbons's *Ellen Foster*, Walter Dean Myers's *Monster*, Robert Frost's "Out, Out—," Yoko Kawashima Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppes*, Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Ron Woods's *The Hero*, Ruth White's *Belle Prater's Boy*, and Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." Discuss examples of cooperation and shared values, for example, the rescue of an infant in *The Giver*, aid to former gang members in *Always Running*, a grandmother's encouragement in *J.T.*, love of adventure in *Belle Prater's Boy*, training of a handicapped brother in "The Scarlet Ibis," and a loving foster mother and orphan in *Ellen Foster*.
2. Lead a choral reading of Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus." Discuss its value on the Statue of Liberty. Determine how this ode may have influenced Lois Lowry's *Messenger*.

**Literature**

1. With a group, list and explain significant actions. Include these: courting a widow, saving a dying dog, bargaining for a fur jacket, traveling by sled, counting salmon and trout, teasing a blind man, visiting a brother, chanting to newcomers, losing a birthmark, packing embroidery supplies, refusing healing, kissing, posting messages, confessing to the Leader, maintaining a museum, keening for the dead, digging a parallel garden, sharing past histories, retrieving a gatherer from the forest, binding bleeding feet, treating victims of a fever, and keeping secrets. Categorize each under key headings, for example, strengths, disagreements, yearnings, bargains, and good deeds.
2. Explain to a small group the symbiotic nature of the Seer's life with Matty. What does each contribute to their home? What issues spark disagreements? Which person needs more care? training? advice? entertainment?
3. Contrast minor characters in terms of action, commentary, and significance. Include the keeners, wall builders, Ramon's mother and sister, Gabe, Gatherer's widow and infant, Matty's mother and

brother, Trademaster, Valdik, Kira's mother, Herbalist, Valdik's mother, petitioners, Stocktender's widow, crippled man, the Seer's enemies and rescuers, chanters, persecutors of villagers, and the Mentor's students. Which characters are stereotypes? Which seem like characterizations of real people? Which have the most influence on the action? Which profit most from Matty's self-sacrifice?

4. Write a theme in which you explain the purpose of a minor incident in the action. Choose from these: something attacks a frog, Kira wears a face covering, Ramon fishes for salmon with his friend, Jean kisses Matty, Seer refuses to consider a Gaming Machine, Matty picks a sprig of basil, the crowd grows quiet before the stage, Matty conceals a heart drawn in the dust, Matty refuses to trade his fishing pole, Kira civilizes the Fiercest of the Fierce, someone leads a weeping woman from the Trade Mart, and Leader sleeps from weariness.

**Math and Computer Art**

1. Generate flash cards for the following vocabulary words. Add iconography to give clues to each term:

ambling	amiable
amulet	appliquéd
balm	benign
bravado	capacity
clematis	commotion
coreopsis	deceitful
defiantly	deftly
delude	demeanor
designate	disdain
dispersing	dissenters
distorted	distracted
diverted	edict
embittered	fronds
gangly	gimp
gloater	glumly
grotesquely	hell-kite
herbalist	hovel
illusion	immobilized
impassable	implored
inevitably	inhospitable
intricate	juttéd
keening	lacerations
landmarks	lavish
malevolent	mentor
onslaught	outcropping
passive	perceptions
perfectionist	pervaded

populace  
rasping  
sacrificed  
shrouded  
sorcery  
subsided  
sulfurous  
surge talons  
tentatively  
thicket  
translucent  
usher vermin  
whorls  
wryly yarrow

prisms  
reminisce  
sauté  
sinuously  
stealth  
substantial  
superficial  
tendrils

thrummed  
ungainly  
wary

**Social Studies**

1. Compose a short speech in which you contrast incidents in the fable with current issues concerning illegal aliens, Mexican border patrols and vigilantism, war refugees, creation of an Underground Railroad for Central Americans seeking asylum, deaths of Mexican immigrants in the Southwestern desert, deportation of Hispanic aliens, return of Haitian refugees, deaths of Chinese aliens in transit, international adoptions, and the establishment of English as a national language.
2. Explain in a theme how Village incorporates newcomers into valuable positions, particularly the roles of Healer, Leader, Messenger, and Seer. Suggest more posts for youth and women, for example, Welcomer, Cook, Baker, Dyer, Librarian, Lookout, Bellringer, Signmaker, Recorder, Historian, Storyteller, Singer, Gravetender, Scout, Weaver, Veterinarian, and Poultrytender.
3. Draw a Venn diagram representing the parallel lifestyles and activities of Jean and Kira. Note the aspects they share; for example, loving fathers, talents, determination, absent mothers, energy, kindness, and friendship with Matty.

**Law**

1. List proposed changes in American law that would threaten relationships between citizens and aliens. For example, laws limiting residence of foreign college students, protecting migrant laborers from exploitation, requiring military service of aliens, jailing and deporting alien criminals and terrorists, fining employers who hire illegal workers, and curtailing free schooling and health serv-

ices to impoverished aliens and to children born in the U.S. to aliens. Which laws would be hardest to enforce? Which would do the most harm to vulnerable people? Which would benefit U.S. citizens?

**Science and Health**

1. Present an oral and written summary of community, county, state, national, and international methods of preventing epidemics, for example, by immunization and booster shots against hepatitis, whooping cough, diphtheria, smallpox, polio, tetanus, and typhoid fever. Propose ways of aiding Ramon and his sister without jeopardizing the health of Village; for example, quarantining them, and examining their family and contacts for symptoms of the fever.

**Language**

1. Form a team of readers to tape expanded, imaginative episodes of Messenger. Create scenes in which Seer and Kira speak at Matty's funeral, Matty is buried near Gatherer, Mentor marries Stocktender's widow, Kira makes a memorial wall hanging for the museum, Frolic establishes a new home with Kira, Leader announces a new Messenger, Jean takes bread to Ramon and his sister, the herbalist treats Kira's injuries, Valdik's mother returns for her sister and little ones, Kira opens a dyeing and weaving business, and the Leader bans the Trade Mart and Gaming Machines.
2. Define the elements of a cautionary tale by citing scenes from the fable. What actions require caution? Who is in danger? How do people endanger all of Village and its values? Why is secrecy detrimental to Village? Which characters accept risk and death?

**Art, Costume Design, and Music**

1. Using desktop publishing or other media, design a layout for a cemetery or village wall, a banner announcing the defeat of the petition and the opening of a weaving shop, a business card for Leader or for Herbalist, a lesson in table manners for newcomers' children or in braille for the Seer, first aid for nosebleed or lacerated feet, a wall chart on the use of yarrow and white willow bark in healing or on each villager's special talents, an epitaph for Matty or Gatherer, a list of first aid or travel items needed for a journey through Forest,

an extended definition of flashback or fable, an advertisement for a new messenger or gatherer, a map of Village or of paths through Forest that skirt the stagnant pond, and a sketch of Kira's futuristic wall hangings or of Jean's bread stall.

2. Create a bulletin board illustrating visual scenes from the story. Include climbing the circular stair, hiding Frolic in a shirt, making fresh lettuce and basil salad, selling bread at a stall, dyeing thread with juice from herbs, passing a surge from Leader to Matty, covering faces against the odor of decay, the arrival of books by river barge, rescue of a frog, Gatherer's widow comforting her infant, and packing for a journey.

### **Drama and Speech**

1. Write several conversations that are only implied, such as Leader's confirmation of Matty's departure with Kira, Mentor's courtship of Stocktender's widow, Matty's return visit to his brother, Seer's rescue and rehabilitation from blinding, teasing "Rosy," bargaining for a fur jacket or a Gaming Machine, Herbalist examining Ramon and his sister, Kira's reunion with her father, and secret requests to Trademaster to remove a birthmark. Act out your dialogue for an audio or videotaping.
2. Describe aloud the multiple purposes of petitions, town meetings, closed borders, chanting rejection to newcomers, and public debate. Why does the shift in thinking about refugees dismay Leader, Matty, Valdik and his mother, and the Seer?
3. Discuss your reaction to Village. What role would you play in the fictional town; for example, Principal, Baker, Veterinarian, Minister, Barber, Woodcutter, or Gravedigger? Which characters would you choose for friends or family? How would you react to closing Village to outsiders? What advice would you give Matty about risking one last journey through the hostile forest? Would you choose marriage over living alone? professional over working class? male or female? Native-born citizen or immigrant?

### **Composition**

1. Make an oral report on the theme of reclamation. Stress how Village reclaims newcomers like Leader, Messenger, Vladik and his mother, Matty, and Seer. Which characters are most in need of rehabilitation? forgiveness? thanks? comfort?

2. Compose a first person account of Leader's arrival in Village by sled with the infant Gabe. Make a list of questions for Leader to ask, such as where orphaned children stay, who cares for the poor and needy, and where newcomers can receive food, clothing, and shelter.

### **Education**

1. Sketch a welcoming center where newcomers can learn the local language and where children can acquire manners, customs, amusements, literacy skills, and books. Divide the complex into study areas, labs, playgrounds, and libraries for pre-schoolers, grade-schoolers, advanced students, and adult learners.

### **How Language Works**

Lowry expresses her attitude toward characters and themes through insightful detail:

1. Leader expresses his need for a loving relationship in his old village: "I never knew what it meant to have a pet. Or even to love something and be loved back."
2. Matty's gift to Seer is news from his old village: "She lives? My daughter is alive?"
3. Through contrast, Lowry elevates Matty over Ramon in terms of courage. Of the dangers of Forest, Ramon says, "I'm never going in. ... Not after seeing what it did to Gatherer."
4. A glimpse of home through Kira's tapestry reveals a worsening selfishness and callousness in Village. Mentor, in command of wall builders, yells, "Five to a stack. You! You idiot! Stop that! If you aren't going to help, go someplace else."
5. Matty's death brings life to the spirits and ideals of villagers: "Back in Village, a breeze came up."
6. Leader sets Matty apart from others for his uniqueness: "There have been other messengers, and there will be more to come. Your true name is Healer."

### **Alternate Assessment**

1. List in chronological order and describe significant events connected with Village history. Mention the first and second petitions, Matty's flight from an abusive mother, the Seer's recuperation, Jean's

kiss, Kira's wall hanging, Frolic's survival, digging a new garden plot, Ramon's fever, a request for a fur jacket, the return of the birthmark, the flight of Matty's spirit, posting messages in Forest, the red sled in the museum, the blinding of Seer, Matty's receipt of a surge from Leader, death of a viper, Matty's deceit and lies, Kira's twisted leg, burying Gatherer, covering noses against the smell of decay, the building of a wall, restoration of the tapestry, return of Matty's body to Village, the healed frog, Vladik's arrival, recognition of a stone amulet, and trading of the deepest self.

2. List events from the fable that express strong attitudes toward kinship, romance, hope, obedience, parenthood, healing, the future, memories, education, hospitality, courage, pet ownership, and synergy. Indicate Lowry's apparent opinion on each subject.
3. Compose brief definitions of fable, flashback, and cautionary tale as they apply to Messenger. What changes in the plot would require more flashbacks? How does the fable's moral project hope for community? What caution does Lowry extend to readers?
4. Summarize scenes that depict conflict, particularly secret deals with Trademaster, a petition closing Village to outsiders, a puncture of the Seer's foot, Ramon's fever, keening for Gatherer, rejection of a fur jacket, Jean's worry about changes in Mentor, Ramon's boasting about the Gaming Machine, and Matty's insistence on retrieving Kira.

## Vocabulary

Choose words from the list below that complete each citation from the play.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It hopped and \_\_\_\_\_ toward him in the mud.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Our gifts are our \_\_\_\_\_, he remembered saying to the blind man.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Then, just as suddenly, they were gone: \_\_\_\_\_, he thought, for another attack.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Now he saw that it was not \_\_\_\_\_ thorny branches.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. It was a tangled knot of fears and \_\_\_\_\_ and dark struggles for power.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Matty remembered his own child self, his \_\_\_\_\_ and the terrible anguish it had concealed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Boys generally \_\_\_\_\_ such things—but now he wished he knew them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Some of those who had been among the most industrious, the kindest, and the most \_\_\_\_\_ citizens of Village now went to the platform and shouted.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Thick around a tall trellis, a vine that had been simply green when he arrived the day before was now \_\_\_\_\_ with opened blue and white morning glories.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Squatting, it moved its \_\_\_\_\_ eyes around.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 11. It would take too much out of him and it would \_\_\_\_\_ their progress.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 12. It was not her usual \_\_\_\_\_ smile, fraught with flirtatiousness.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Despite the \_\_\_\_\_ of the conversation, Matty chuckled.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 14. She was standing in front of the \_\_\_\_\_ Kira had made for her father.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 15. He wiped his face with his hands and felt the \_\_\_\_\_ fade.

A. profuse  
B. deceits  
C. weaponry  
D. lesions  
E. protruding

F. skittered  
G. saucy  
H. solemnity  
I. disdained  
J. random

K. bravado  
L. stalwart  
M. tapestry  
N. regrouping  
O. hamper



## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose an answer to complete each statement below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The viper
  - A. hides in Matty's backpack.
  - B. turns brown.
  - C. becomes Jean's garden pet.
  - D. punctures the sole of Kira's foot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Vladik arrives
  - A. at Village with Gabe.
  - B. without his aunt and siblings.
  - C. after the wall is nearly completed.
  - D. only for the Trade Mart.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Leader knows
  - A. how Matty rode the red sled.
  - B. that Ramon wants to be Fisherman.
  - C. why Kira changed the wall hanging from smooth to knotty.
  - D. that Forest is growing murderous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When Village returns to normal,
  - A. Mentor's birthmark reappears.
  - B. Seer lives happily with Matty, Frolic, and Kira.
  - C. Gatherer is safe once more in Forest.
  - D. Stocktender trains his children to replace him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Matty is fascinated by
  - A. the number of trout and salmon in the river.
  - B. the heart drawn in the dust.
  - C. the circular stairs.
  - D. *Moby Dick*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Trademaster
  - A. causes an epidemic.
  - B. allows no children at the mart.
  - C. writes in a thick book.
  - D. arranges marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The Seer explains that
  - A. Kira stayed behind with her mother.
  - B. dyes require herbs from the old village.
  - C. Gaming Machines endanger Mentor's family.
  - D. he has his own way of seeing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Matty suggests
  - A. combining powers.
  - B. presenting the second petition to Leader.
  - C. a new path through Forest.
  - D. ways to increase the number of river salmon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Mentor surprises Matty
  - A. with a gift book of maps.
  - B. by pushing to the front of the stage.
  - C. with a gift of bread before the journey through Forest.
  - D. with a warning while the two boys fish on the bank.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Kira reveals
  - A. a sap that cures the poison.
  - B. to Seer her near-death experience in Forest.
  - C. how her hand shimmers.
  - D. to Leader the location of the stagnant pond.

### Part II: Identification (20 points)

Which character does the following:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. dies entangled in Forest
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. loses his eyes to enemies
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. no longer loves literature
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. names Matty
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. boasts of having a Gaming Machine
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. regrets leaving a sister behind
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. treats Ramon for fever
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. refuses to be cured
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. kisses Matty

### Part III: Explanation (10 points)

Explain the significance of each term below:

1. Branch
2. keening
3. Fiercest of the Fierce
4. Museum
5. Rosy

### Part IV: Essay Question (40 points)

1. Account for the Seer's suspicions about the Trade Mart.
2. Defend Matty's decision to venture one more time into Forest.
3. Compare the influence of Leader, Mentor, and Seer on refugees.
4. Express the author's attitude toward change.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: True/False (30 points)

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Leader names the pup Frolic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Kira offers to push a way through tangled underbrush.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Matty disappoints Ramon by not curing his fever.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Newcomers are surprised at the chanting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Matty lies to Seer about going to bed at noon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The pup curls beside its dead mother.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Matty once lied and stole.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Seer washes fresh lettuce and basil for dinner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Kira requests a garden next to her father's plants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Jean is jealous of Matty's regard for Kira.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Leader's books arrive by river barge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Leader's old community allowed no pets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Mentor's group dislikes foreign dialects.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The smell of decay kills Matty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Matty locates Kira's shoes in the mud.

### Part II: Matching (30 points)

Match these descriptions with one of the names listed below.

- |                        |                    |                   |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| A. Seer                | H. Ramon's mother  | O. Trademaster    |
| B. Branch              | I. Matty's brother | P. Leader         |
| C. Gabe                | J. newcomers       | Q. Jean           |
| D. Vladik              | K. Matty           | R. Frolic         |
| E. Stocktender's widow | L. Ramon           | S. Mentor         |
| F. Herbalist           | M. Stocktender     | T. Matty's mother |
| G. Kira                | N. Gatherer        |                   |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. courts a widow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. angers Ramon's mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. tells Seer that Matty is to bring Kira
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. admires Leader's books
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. is afraid of the dark
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. died of old age
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. fears an epidemic
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. likes being read to
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. sells bread at a market stall
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. needs a stick
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. fishes with Matty
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. abused Matty
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. received welcome and chanting
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. dies tangled in Forest
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. receives Mentor's attentions

### Part III: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Explain Leader's decision to rescue the travelers.
2. Account for hospitality in Village
3. Describe Vladik's arrival.
4. Discuss Leader's sadness.
5. Describe how Healer treats the sick.

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

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

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

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

#### Part II: Identification (20 points)

- |             |                        |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1. Gatherer | 6. Vladik's mother     |
| 2. Seer     | 7. Stocktender's widow |
| 3. Mentor   | 8. Herbalist           |
| 4. Leader   | 9. Kira                |
| 5. Ramon    | 10. Jean               |

#### Part III: Explanation (10 points)

- Matty's old dog
- mourning for Gatherer and Matty
- Matty's nickname when he first arrived at Village
- location of the red sled and of Seer's history
- nickname for Mentor, indicating his birthmark

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  | 11. T |
| 2. T | 7. T  | 12. T |
| 3. F | 8. T  | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. F  | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. F | 15. F |

#### Part II: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. S | 6. B  | 11. L |
| 2. O | 7. F  | 12. T |
| 3. P | 8. A  | 13. J |
| 4. K | 9. Q  | 14. N |
| 5. R | 10. G | 15. E |

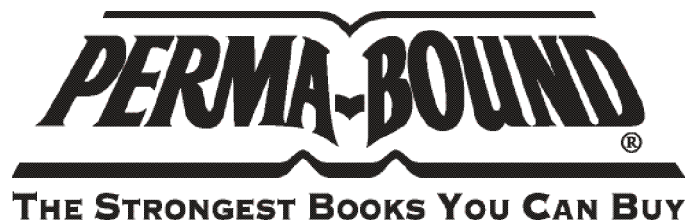
#### Part III: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.





5. Describe the circumstances that precede the building project.



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