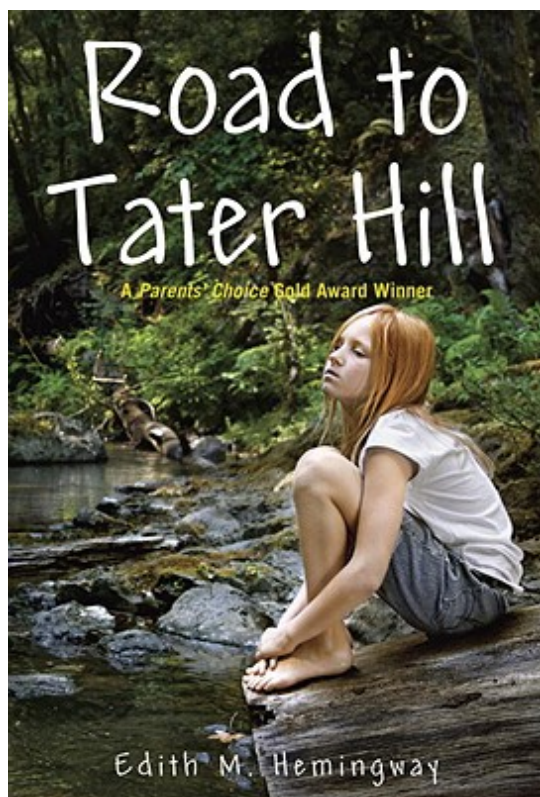


A Discussion Guide for
Road to Tater Hill

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A Table of Contents

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Reading Assignment Bookmarks

Listed on these bookmarks are the designated chapter groupings and a space allotted for **Target Completion Dates**. A suggested format for a group or individual novel study is to assign weekly **Target Completion Dates** for students to finish reading prior to the weekly book discussion session.

Procedure:

- Print book marks on cardstock – one per student in novel study group.
- Trim the edges of bookmark.
- Give to student with the directions to:
 - Write their name on it.
 - Copy Target Completion Dates in designated space below assigned chapters to be read.
 - Keep the bookmark in the book for reference through the course of novel study.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>Name:</p> <p>Chapters 1 through 4</p> <p>Chapters 5 through 7</p> <p>Chapters 8 through 10</p> <p>Chapters 11 through 14</p> <p>Chapters 15 through 18</p> <p>Chapters 19 through 21</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>Name:</p> <p>Chapters 1 through 4</p> <p>Chapters 5 through 7</p> <p>Chapters 8 through 10</p> <p>Chapters 11 through 14</p> <p>Chapters 15 through 18</p> <p>Chapters 19 through 21</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div> <p>Name:</p> <p>Chapters 1 through 4</p> <p>Chapters 5 through 7</p> <p>Chapters 8 through 10</p> <p>Chapters 11 through 14</p> <p>Chapters 15 through 18</p> <p>Chapters 19 through 21</p>
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Discussion Questions for Chapters 1 through 4

For months I had wished and wished the baby would be a girl, a little sister. Maybe I shouldn't have wished so hard. A boy might have lived (1).

1. What does this first line of the book suggest that the story will be about?
2. What do you already know about the protagonist, even before knowing her name?
3. Has someone died? Who?
4. How does reading this line make you feel? Sympathetic? Empathetic? Concerned? Explain your answer.
5. Have you ever wished so very hard for something that having it seemed like a reality? Wished for something, with all of your heart, only to be utterly devastated? When? What was your wish?

Weren't wishes like prayers (1)?

1. Are wishes like prayers? Tiny little bits of desire longed for, like a prayer?
2. What do you think about wishes? What things do you wish for?
3. What do you think about prayers? What sorts of things do you pray for?
4. Is it important to wish for things? How so?
5. Is it important to pray for things? How so?

Born July 13, 1963. Died July 14, 1963 (3).

1. The baby lived for only one day. How can it be that Annabel's family is so distraught over a child who lived for only one day?
2. When do you think Annie's family began to love baby Mary Kate?
3. How are they dealing with Mary Kate's passing?
4. Are they dealing with Mary Kate's passing?
5. How deep can the love for a tiny, one-day old infant become?
6. How deep can the sadness over the infant's death become?

Our trip started out like all our trips, with Daddy singing, "[Off we go into the wild blue yonder...](#)" I liked the song because it made our travels more exciting, and I did love the North Carolina mountains (11).

1. Do you think that maybe Annie liked the song because Daddy sang it?
2. Do you think Daddy made travels more exciting?
3. How do you think Annie feels about her father?
4. Click [HERE](#) to access a YouTube video of a squadron singing the Air Force Song. Look at the joy, pride, and spontaneity of the soldiers singing the song. Do you think Annie's father was like one of the soldiers featured in the You Tube video? If so, can you see how she would miss him? Need him? Love him?

But somehow turning on the Ed Sullivan Show didn't seem right tonight (17).

1. To view some YouTube presentations of the Ed Sullivan Show click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).
2. Why did Annie think that watching Ed Sullivan's variety show was the wrong thing to do at that time?
3. Do you think that Annie and her family will ever be happy again?

"Here's the yellow blanket. You did a good job on it, Annie," Grandma said (22).

1. Annie spent hours embroidering the yellow blanket to use with the new baby, time happily spent with her mother at her side. Why do you think she wants to keep it?
 - a. Because she worked hard on it?
 - b. Because she likes yellow?
 - c. Because it means something to her?
2. With every stitch she made, Annie anticipated the infant's birth. Do you think that by keeping the blanket, Annie's sadness will lessen?
3. If blue is for boys and pink is for girls, why is the blanket the color yellow? Why is yellow an important color when it comes to infant births?

They must have noticed me because there was a quick "shushing" sound, and when I turned around, the nurses pretended they were busy reading papers spread out on the big desk (24).

1. Were the nurses trying to keep something from Annie? Trying to keep some sort of secret? Why?
2. Were they being mean or were they trying to be considerate of her feelings?
3. Annie is eleven years old. Do you think she is old enough to understand what is happening around her?
4. What is happening?
5. Do you think that she has feelings that need to be understood, as well as the others around her?
6. Have you ever been "shushed" out of a conversation? If so, how did that feel?

The tiny house sat just off the edge of Loggers Creek Road (30).

1. Looking at the map, one can see that the mysterious tiny house was located far to the west of the baby's grave and the Miller's home – away from Annie's troubles.
 - a. Do you think the location is important to Annie?
 - b. Do you think it may be important to the story?
2. Who do you think lives in that house?
3. Do you think that, maybe, someone died in that house?
4. Is it haunted? Dangerous? Intriguing?

Eliza's House



"But I want him to come," I blurted out. "I need him (35)."

1. Why is it that Annie has to remind her family of her need for her father?
2. Have they forgotten that she misses him, too?
3. Have they forgotten that she is also grieving the loss of her little sister, Mary Kate?
4. Have they forgotten about her?

My yellow blanket and my rock baby. Those were the two things I needed. Then maybe I could think about Daddy and how far away he was. And how Mama wasn't Mama anymore (36).

1. How can a rock and a blanket substitute for a parent's love?
2. Could Annie be blocking out people in an effort to sooth her own sadness?
3. What has happened to Mama?
4. What has happened to Annie?

"It was many and many year ago, in a kingdom by the sea. That a maiden there lived who you may know by the name of Annabel Lee (40)."

1. Annie said that no one had called her name beautiful before. No one. Can you imagine how hearing this made Annie feel? That this old, solitary woman said that her name was beautiful?
2. Do you think that, maybe, Annie felt important? Noticed? Valued?
3. Seraphs are celestial beings, angels, or the afterlife spirits of those that have died. Has Mary Kate become a seraph?
4. Seraphs are known to live in heaven. Does Mary Kate reside in heaven?
5. Click [HERE](#) to listen to and watch a video interpretation of the haunting poem the old woman recited, Edgar Allen Poe's Annabel Lee. Imagine that you are Annie listening to a mysterious old woman recite this poem. How would you feel?

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Discussion Questions for Chapters 5 through 7

My favorite was the one with a lamb leaping over the name and BELOVED CHILD written beneath. But Mama chose a plain gray stone with a rounded top. No Heart. No animals. No extra words. Only MARY KATE WINTERS with JULY 13-14, 1963 to be carved beneath (53).

1. Why do you think Mama chose such a non-descript tombstone for Mary Kate's grave?
2. Wasn't Mary Kate 'beloved'? Or did she die too soon to be loved?
3. Do you think any child-like decoration would cause Mama to feel more saddened? More depressed?
4. Do you think that the tombstone and Annie's rock baby share any similarities? If so, what are they?
5. Do you think the tombstone and the rock baby share any differences? If so, what are they?

I'll never know any of these answers, but Mary Kate will still be a part of me (56).

"Nothing will ever dis sever my soul from the soul of my sister, Mary Kate," I whispered. Then I said it again louder, more like a promise. "Nothing will ever dis sever my soul from the soul of my sister, Mary Kate (56)."

1. The definition for the word **dis sever** is to become separated or disunited, to break apart, or to divide into parts. Do you think Annie knows what she is saying when she makes a promise such as this?
2. What is a person's soul?
3. How can Mary Kate remain a part of Annie? Where will she reside within her?
4. Can the recitation of a line from Edgar Allen Poe's poem be considered a prayer? A promise? A wish? Explain your answer.
5. Do you think that Annie is beginning to come to terms with Mary Kate's passing? The death of her long anticipated, beloved little sister? How so?

She strummed across the strings a few times, trying out some chords, then flowed into a song. The beautiful, haunting sound was amazing. I knew from piano lessons that the minor key gave the music its sadness. But the woman's voice was clear as water and bottomless as a well. It reached right into me and filled the empty hole (61).

1. Click [HERE](#) and listen to Jamie Woon's rendition of *Wayfaring Stranger*, the song the old woman sang to Annie. How does this song make you feel?
2. Click [HERE](#) to experience the dulcimer, as played by Bing Futch. What do think about this instrument? Can you imagine Annie's reaction to experiencing the sight and sound of the dulcimer for the first time?
3. Do you think the sound of the dulcimer enhanced the feeling of old woman's song? How so?
4. How can a song such as this one reach into someone and fill an empty hole?
5. What is the empty hole that Annie is referring to?
 - a. Mary Kate's death?

- b. Her mother's depression?
 - c. Her father's absence?
 - d. The loss of Bobby's friendship?
6. Annie says that the woman's sound was haunting and that the key made it sound sad. Do you think that the woman's sad tone was created only by the key with which she was singing?
 7. Consider the lyrics of the song, especially the line "A-travelin' through this world of woe." What does this line mean? What is woe?

Miss Eliza smiled. "Yes, Annabel, I'd be much obliged. I'd like some light in my house (65)."

1. Do you think that the light Miss Eliza is referring to is only physical?
2. Could the light she is referring to be symbolic of something? If so, what is it?
3. How can a sad, broken soul such as Annabel shed light upon anything?
4. Could the act of helping someone help Annabel to heal herself? How so?

With all that had happened I knew I had changed, too, but I didn't think I looked different on the outside (66).

1. Consider how Annie has changed, thus far in the story.
 - a. With regard to her mothers' depression. How is she handling this now?
 - b. With regard to Mary Kate's death. How is handling this now?
 - c. With regard to Miss Eliza. What sort of relationship is developing there?
 - d. With regard to her friendship with Bobby. What is going on between the two?
2. Is it possible for people to change physically during times of emotional stress? Have you ever witnessed such a change in someone, or maybe within yourself?

"We all lost the baby!"

"Yes Annie." Grandpa was walking closer. "But she was the mother. That's the hardest to bear."

"She's my mother, too, and I'm still here," I yelled back. "What about me? Aren't I good enough (71)?"

1. Is it true what Grandpa says? That the death is hardest on the mother? Why or why not?
2. Is Annie's sense of grief less important than her mother's?
3. What is Annie afraid of?
4. What does Annie want? What is her deepest desire?

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Discussion Questions for Chapters 8 to 10

And so is Bobby. At least he was a good friend. I didn't really know what was wrong between me and Bobby, but something had changed and it was probably my fault. I wasn't sure how to fix it (84).

1. What do you think is wrong between Annie and Bobby? Who is pushing whom m away?
2. What needs to be changed?
3. Is the strife between the two Annie's fault?
4. Could it be that Annie is treating Bobby much like her mother is treating her? If so, in what ways?
5. Why do you think people pull away from those that care about them in times of grieving?
6. Annie wonders how she can fix the problem between Bobby and herself. What sort of advice would you give her? How would you help Annie?

"That McGee woman is out of prison. I read about it in the paper."

"You don't say the other woman answered. "Been so long ago, I'd nearly forgotten the story. Where's she living? That o' house ain't fit for habitating (88)."

1. How does the way the lady says "that McGee woman" illustrate her feelings for Miss Eliza?
2. The other woman says that it has been "so long ago" since Miss Eliza was imprisoned. Apparently, the woman knew of Miss Eliza back then. Do you think that they were friendly to one another? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think that, possibly, these good women of the church are concerned for Miss Eliza's well-being? Even though Miss Eliza has completed her prison term and is now considered to be a free woman, do you think they might be willing to reach out and help her? Why or why not?

"We snuck up to the McGee house round about eleven and painted murderer across the front door. And then we pushed over the outhouse." Bobby was laughing so hard, he dropped the rock he was holding and bent over double. Jimmy slapped him on the back and laughed along with him (90).

1. Bobby and Jimmy have made a poor choice of action. Can you explain why what they have done is wrong?
2. Not only have they damaged personal property, they could have destroyed Miss Eliza's ability to trust others. Do you believe this statement is true? Explain yourself.
3. Do you think Miss Eliza will ever be able to forgive the boys for what they have done?
4. Do you think Annie will ever forgive Bobby?
5. Should the boys be forgiven?
6. Do you think that they even care what Miss Eliza or Annie think about their behavior? Explain.

“...And it was Depression times. My daddy had to make do for five of us. I was the oldest. He promised me to Jake McGee without my say (94).”

“I think my daddy felt bad about what he did, though he never said. He’d and look in on me. Brought my mama’s old loom and set it up in my house so as I had a means to make a bit of money (94).”



1. How could a father grant a man permission to marry his daughter without her consent?
2. Compare Annie’s father with Miss Eliza’s. Do both men care for their daughters? If so, how is their love expressed?
3. Why do you think Miss Eliza’s father felt bad about what he did?
4. Why do you think, by giving her the loom, he wanted to provide his daughter a way to make some money?
5. Miss Eliza’s story is kind of a grown up tale for Annie to hear. Why do you think she has chosen to share this with Annie?

“...A pale yellow only one shade different from the one you dropped outside my house the other day. And I made a promise to my baby that I’d care for it better than my mama or daddy ever did for me. Weaving and dreaming was most all I did those days (94).”

1. Do you find the color of Miss Eliza’s blanket to be interesting? Why so?
2. How is the color *yellow* important to the story?
3. Miss Eliza made a promise to her unborn baby. Can you think of a time when Annie made a similar promise? To whom?
4. Do you think Miss Eliza understands what it feels like to be abandoned by her parents? How so?
5. List the ways that Annie and Miss Eliza share similarities, both emotionally and historically.
6. How do these similarities bond them as friends?

“Isaiah was born that night. Too soon and much too small. When he breathed, it was ragged and hard. Like he couldn’t catch his own breath.” Miss Eliza wrapped her arm around my shoulder and pulled me close. “I held him through that long night until he grew cold in my arms and the midwife took him away (95).”

1. Why do you think Miss Eliza hugged Annie while telling this sad story?
2. Was she trying to console Annie or be consoled, herself?
3. How do you feel knowing the truth about Isaiah’s death?
4. In what ways are Isaiah’s and Mary Kate’s deaths similar?
5. In what ways are their deaths different?

"He asked did I strike my husband. Without thinking, I answered yes (97)."

1. Was Jake McGee's death intentional?
2. Do you think his death should be classified as a murder? Why or why not?
3. Should Miss Eliza have gone to jail for thirty years? Explain your answer.
4. Do you think that things being as they were, Miss Eliza would have received a fair trial?

"All you do is run away. Aww gee, Annie, aren't you ever going to get over it (113)?"

1. What is the 'it' that Bobby is referring to?
2. Why do you think Annie keeps running away? What is causing her to do so?
3. Bobby says, "Aww gee..." as if to convince Annie to listen to him. Why?
4. What does Bobby think about Annie? How does he feel about her?
5. What does Annie think about Bobby? How does she feel about him?
6. When Annie runs, where is she going? What is she running toward? What is she running away from? Explain your answer.

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Discussion Questions for Chapters 11 to 14

What about Mama? What was she thinking while she rocked and rocked in that chair, staring at the empty fireplace? Mama would never “get over” losing Mary Kate, I knew. But would she get better? Would she ever be Mama again (116)?

1. What does it mean to “get over” something? Think about the phrase – *get* means obtain, to succeed, to achieve – *over* means to move across a barrier or intervening space, move beyond or forward. To “get over” something, once the definition is fully understood, is hard to do. Do you agree?
2. Even if Mama gets better, do you think she’ll ever be able to forget the trauma of Mary Kate’s passing, plus the two miscarriages before her?
3. Has Miss Eliza been able to completely “get over” Isaiah’s death? Or, has the child’s death changed her forever?
4. That being said, do you think Mama will ever be the same? Explain your answer.

How had Miss Eliza fallen asleep each night in prison for thirty years (118)?

“A body learns acceptance after a time,” she finally said. “And acceptance becomes comfort and safety. I had my books. Reading and dreaming is what gave me freedom to burst beyond those thick walls. It gave me the freedom to fly (128).”

1. Like Miss Eliza, is “acceptance” what Mama needs to learn after a time to become whole? Explain your answer.
2. Like Miss Eliza, is “acceptance” what Annie needs to learn after a time? How so?
3. Miss Eliza said that she dreamt while weaving with her mother’s old loom. Do you think she found the same kind of peace while reading in prison? **How** can that be?
4. Miss Eliza said that reading gave her freedom to fly? What does she mean by this comment?
5. Is it possible that enduring a tragedy such as being unjustly imprisoned possibly become a liberating thing? How can that be? Explain your answer.

*Bobby laughed. “I know. Mamaw might not say that same thing, but there’s lots of neighbor folk who won’t...well...be neighborly. Miss Eliza’s right nice, **though**. I liked her (132).”*

1. Helpful, cordial, gracious, and harmonious are just a few synonyms for the word “neighborly”. Why won’t lots of neighbor folk be “neighborly”, according to Bobby?
2. Do you think Miss Eliza has been pre-judged by the community as being dangerous, shameful, or foul? Is this sort of prejudice fair? Why or why not?

3. Something has changed within Bobby. Can you explain his transformation? How does he now see Miss Eliza as a person? What caused this change?
4. Have you ever been warned about associating with a certain person? Can you see, in some circumstances, that the warning might be wise to follow? Can you see how, maybe, the person has been misunderstood? How do you handle situations such as this?

By the time we reached the bottom, I was out of breath and laughing. Mama looked at me and smiled. Actually smiled at me (137)!

She mumbled something.

“What did you say?”

“It’s too hard. Just too hard...” And she was silent again (140).

1. One minute Mama seems almost normal and the next she returns to her emotional shell. What caused this dramatic shift in Mama’s behavior?
2. What is “just too hard”? Could it be returning to everyday life? Being happy once again? Accepting the fact that her infant has died?
3. When Mama became “silent again” she shut Annie out, once again. How would you feel if you were Annie? What would you do?
4. Do you think that Annie’s relationship with Miss Eliza is important to her at this time? Without Miss Eliza, where could Annie turn for comfort or understanding?

Grandma mumbled. “Oh, Maggie, Maggie, don’t make us do it.”

Do what? Why wouldn’t anyone talk to me; tell me what I needed to know (144)?

1. Why do you think that Grandma, Grandpa, and even Bobby are afraid to tell Annie what it is she needs to know?
2. What do you think Grandma is referring to when she says, “Don’t make us do it?”
3. Is the not-knowing part of the question more fearful than understanding what Grandma is referring to?
4. Why aren’t people talking to Annie about the important issues involving her mother’s well-being? Why are they leaving her out?
5. Do you think that Annie can handle the truth about her mother’s condition?
6. Could you handle the truth, if you were Annie?
7. What would you do or say if you were Annie in this situation?

Discussion Questions for Chapters 15 to 18

Of course it's a difficult time. Didn't Grandma know how hard it was for me, too? Or didn't I count? We'd already lost Mary Kate. Daddy was overseas, and now Mama was slipping away a little more each day (152).

1. Is Annie's sense of desperation understandable?
2. It seems that she has been left alone to deal with difficult emotional situations, doesn't it?
3. What can be done to give Annie the emotional support she needs? Who can help?
4. What would you do to help Annie? How could you give her some badly needed emotional support?

"Is Mama up yet?" I was afraid to ask if she was any better.

Grandma shook her head. "Still sound asleep when I peeked in her door. But sleep is a good healer."

I ate my cereal while looking at the cute little cartoony guys on the back of the box and listening to their snap, crackle, pop in my bowl (154).

1. Why do you think Annie was afraid to ask if her mother was feeling better? Do you think she already knew the answer?
2. Annie is eating a cereal that, when the small rice flakes are covered with milk, makes quiet popping sounds. Have you ever been in a situation where there is way too much silence all around? When even the tiniest sounds, like cereal popping in milk, are loud? When you can hear your own heart beat? When the slightest whisper sounds like a shout? Explain your situation. How did you feel?
3. Annie mentions looking at 'cute little cartoony guys' on the back of the *Rise Krispies* box. To access a video clip of a vintage advertisement for *Rice Krispies* and see those cute little guys for yourself, click [HERE](#).

"And as far as your grandma not telling you, child – she's protecting you, too, though she might not comprehend that your imagination is worse than knowing the truth. More than likely she's keeping on with the ever'day sort of things so as she won't give in to the fretting and the crying. It's a body's way of coping. Otherwise it will drag you down so as you might not ever stop."

I looked at Miss Eliza. Yes, I could see that was what Grandma was doing. But was Miss Eliza telling me about herself as much as she was telling me about Grandma (159)?

1. How is it that Miss Eliza understands Grandma's intention to protect Annie from the truth?

2. How does Miss Eliza comprehend Grandma's continual state of busy-ness? How does she know that Grandma is working hard to avoid an emotional breakdown?
3. How does she know about the ways that a body copes with loss?
4. Do you think Miss Eliza was talking about herself?
5. With regard to the phrase "...she won't give into the fretting and the crying" – hasn't Annie tried to avoid surrendering to her need to cry?

"Can I leave my rock baby here, Miss Eliza, so I don't have to go all the way down to the creek (162)?"

1. Annie is now ready to leave her rock baby. She has decided to leave it behind at Miss Eliza's. Do you think that, perhaps, this act is symbolic of Annie's learning to let go of grief?
2. Is she now, possibly, learning to let go of the paralyzing worry about Mama?
3. With Miss Eliza's help, is Annie beginning to heal?

The day we finished painting the kitchen, Miss Eliza brought out her hog fiddle to celebrate. She started singing "Old Joe Clark," and before I knew it, Bobby got up and started dancing, right there in the tiny kitchen. The whole house got to shaking. He called it clogging... (163)."

1. To listen to the sound of the hog fiddle or the dulcimer click [HERE](#).
2. To listen to an ensemble, play the tune "Old Joe Clark" click [HERE](#).
3. To watch a stage full of cloggers dance to "Old Joe Clark" click [HERE](#)
4. To learn the basic steps of clogging click [HERE](#).
5. Isn't it interesting that, once Annie let go of her rock baby, became interested in weaving, and in helping Bobby paint Miss Eliza's home, expressions of joy – music, song, and dance – began to come back into her life?
6. Compare the clogging scene on page 163 with the *Rice Krispies* scene on page 154. How are the two scenes similar?
7. Contrast the clogging scene on page 163 with the *Rice Krispies* scene on page 154. How are the two scenes different?

"Of course I remember the cake. But don't tell me I don't know my own daughter's birthday..."

No one spoke. After another pause in the music, the record launched into a faster piece where the instruments seemed to go in all different directions. I didn't think I could stand to listen to it. I went over to the record player and lifted the needle (170).

1. Earlier Annie enjoyed the sound of the lively hog fiddle, "Old Joe Clark," and Bobby's energetic clogging. Why did the record player's music trouble her?

2. Could the quiet pause followed by frantic music symbolize Annie feelings at that moment? Could the quiet pause represent shock that her mother had forgotten her birthday? The frenzied music as confusion? If so, what does the act of Annie lifting the needle off the record symbolize? What does that say about Annie's emotional state at the moment?

I snatched my hand back, too stunned to yell or to understand what was happening. The burning sting didn't stop. It got worse, spreading over my entire hand. And then I knew what was happening... Yellow jackets (186)!

1. Once again, the color yellow plays an important role in the story.
 - a. Annie made a yellow blanket for Mary Kate, her infant sister who dies.
 - b. Miss Eliza made a yellow receiving blanket for her infant son Isaiah.
 - c. Annie becomes swarmed by and stung by deadly yellow jackets.
2. Has Annie's life become threatened by yellow jackets?
3. Who is willing to sacrifice her life to attempt to save Annie?
4. Does this act surprise you? Why or why not?

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Discussion Questions for Chapters 19 to 21

Sucking in a deep breath and letting it out slowly, I leaned back against the pillow. Mama smoothed my hair away from my eyes. I had so many questions, I couldn't think where to begin. But Mama seemed to know (190).

1. Annie surrenders her head against the pillow. Has she finally relaxed? Has she finally given up the worry and strife? Is she ready to be healed – emotionally and physically?
2. In this moment, the questions Annie is referring to are with regard to the yellow jacket attack. However, throughout the entire story, Annie has had questions. Think about them. Do you recall what they were? Where would you begin?
3. The line “Mama seemed to know” refers to the yellow jacket attack, as well. But...could the line also indicate that Mama knows more? That perhaps she has worked through her issues with grief? That she may be well?

She was holding both my hands now, gripping them together like hands in a prayer. “I was so scared. More frightened than I’ve ever been (191).”

1. Consider the image of Mama holding Annie’s hands together like praying hands. Do you recall, in the beginning of the book, when Annie was wondering if wishes were like prayers? Are wishes like prayers? Or are prayers expressions of more powerful intention or desire?
2. Mama tells Annie that she was more frightened than she had ever been. Do you think that, perhaps, Annie’s accident shocked her into reality? Do you think that her fear of losing Annie brought her back to her senses?
3. Does Mama love Annie? Does Annie know this, now?

“She saved Annie, Mother.” That was Mama speaking up, and I looked at her in surprise. “She saved Annie’s life, and we owe her everything (196).”

1. Who is thinking clearly in this scene – Mama or Grandma?
2. What does the line “...we owe her everything” say about Mama’s feelings about Annie? How do you think Annie feels about those words?

“It’s helping her child.” Miss Eliza was taking charge now. “She needs to weep. Not cry, but weep, just as she is now.” Miss Eliza eased Mama down onto the small cot along the wall and then turned to Bobby and me. “Come. Let’s go out. We’ll let her be for a while. Your mama’s grieving the baby she never got to hold (201).”

1. If someone is known to have an intuitive sense they demonstrate insight, perception, discernment, and insight in certain situations. Annie's discovery of the rock baby as a healing substitute for holding Mary Kate was an intuitive act. Can you recall other ways that Annie demonstrated intuition? With Miss Eliza? With Bobby? With Mama?
2. What is difference between crying and weeping?
3. Why does Mama need to weep?

"Um." Bobby looked down at the road. "There's something I wanted to say to you... Way back when we were in the barn that day...I didn't mean what I said...about getting over...well, about the baby."

"I know (209)."

1. Annie has moved from the unknown to knowing in many ways. Consider the following topics and discuss the various things she learned throughout the course of the novel.
 - a. With regard to friendship with Bobby and Miss Eliza.
 - b. With regard to forgiveness.
 - c. With regard to grieving and sadness.
 - d. With regard to secrets and withholding the truth.
 - e. With regard to laughter, music, dance, and poetry.
 - f. With regard to wishes and prayers.
 - g. With regard to sisterly and motherly love.
2. What do you take away from Annie's story? How are you different because of reading this novel? What sorts of things do you now "know?"

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