

Exploring World Geography

Literary Analysis



NOTGRASS
HISTORY

Literary Analysis by Bethany Poore
(except *Know Why You Believe* analysis by Ray Notgrass)

Copyright © 2020 Notgrass History. All rights reserved.
First Edition (2022 Printing).

You may print copies of this material for your family,
but you may not redistribute it without permission from the publisher.

Notgrass History
975 Roaring River Rd.
Gainesboro, TN 38562

1-800-211-8793
notgrass.com

What Do You Think About What He Thinks?

A Primer for Analysis of Non-Fiction

A non-fiction article, essay, or book has a different approach from a work of fiction. It will likely make an argument, teach, or convey information. Of course, a work of fiction might also be an attempt to make an argument, teach, or convey information; but non-fiction presents the information and the author's perspective in a straightforward manner. The non-fiction piece might be in the form of a story; but it is a story from real life, as in a biography.

Part of education is considering perspectives other than your own and developing your response to them. In a persuasive work, a writer has something to say that he hopes others will at least consider and perhaps agree with. Even the author of a biography writes for a purpose, not only to inform but perhaps also to convince readers about something regarding his subject: that he was instrumental in a war, or influential in Congress, or had some other significant impact.

By reading a work of non-fiction, you might be confirmed in what you believe about something or you might be convinced that you need to change your opinion. You might obtain more information that helps you have a more realistic perspective on an issue. You shouldn't fear this process. You don't want to cast aside basic truth and fall for every new idea you hear, but part of growing and maturing is gaining a more complete understanding of truth. No one has a grasp of all truth or the perfect application of that truth in every situation. Everyone can grow in some areas of life, whether that means learning more truth or learning the application of the truth you know to more situations. This process is part of growing in what the Bible calls discernment (see Hebrews 5:13-14).

A text can be any written material. We analyze every text that we read, whether it is an encyclopedia article, a book of political commentary, or an advertisement, even if only briefly and subconsciously. As with the analysis of fiction, we don't want to lose the joy of reading by over-analyzing, but it is good to do serious and conscious analysis for several reasons. Analysis will help you understand the meaning and purpose of a text; you might even discern a meaning beneath the surface. It can help you connect the text with its background, such as the time in which it was written or something about the author. You can profitably compare the text with other texts to see which are more consistent and believable. Analyzing a text can help you prove a thesis. A summary of a text is a report of its content, but an analysis of a text is an evaluation of its meaning and significance.

In analyzing a work of non-fiction, you want to ask questions of the text. You probably won't answer every question below about every text, but here are things to consider when analyzing non-fiction:

- What is the author's point or purpose?
- What is the argument he is making?
- What is the motivation for the piece? What problem does it address?
- What evidence or logic does he use to support his thesis?
- What is the context from which the author writes (time, place, point of view, background and experience)?
- What assumptions does the author bring to writing this piece?

- What words or ideas are repeated? These will often be clues to the author's point.
- What word choices seem significant? Does the author use any figures of speech to make his argument more persuasive?
- What is the structure of the text? For instance, *The Art of War* is a series of pithy observations and bits of advice, *Here I Stand* is a scholarly biography, *Bridge to the Sun* is a memoir, and *The Abolition of Man* is based on a series of lectures. How does the author build his argument through the work? How does the structure help make the author's point?
- What are the key passages in the work, and why are they important?
- What is surprising, odd, or troubling in the text? (These parts are likely challenging your current understanding.)
- What contradictions and inconsistencies do you find in the text?
- What assumptions do *you* bring to the text?
- Is the text convincing to you? Why or why not? (It is entirely likely that you will agree with some things and disagree with others.)
- What questions do you have after reading it? What further study do you need to do?

When you write an analysis of a non-fiction work, gather your information, impressions, and answers to these questions, then write a coherent essay that responds to the piece. Depending on the length of your essay, you will probably want to summarize the author's purpose and argument, emphasize the central points as you see them, note where you think the author is correct and where he is mistaken, and where he is effective and where he could have expressed his ideas differently. Keep in mind the nature of your assignment, what the teacher expects from you, and what the reader of your analysis needs to understand about the work you are analyzing and about your response to it.

The author whose work you have read wants you to think. Show that you have thought. Expressing your thoughts on paper indicates how well you understand what he has said and, more importantly, how well you understand your own thoughts about the subject.

Analysis of Poetry

You cannot read poetry the way you read a novel, a newspaper, a textbook, or other non-fiction writing. Poetry aims for the heart, for an emotional response, as well as for the mind. Poetry is concentrated language, so how the poem expresses thoughts is extremely important. Don't be afraid to read a poem aloud and slowly. You will probably have to read it more than once to grasp its message fully.

As you read a poem, ask these questions:

- Who is speaking? Is the poem first-person, or is it a third-person speaker?
- What is the occasion?
- Is it a monologue of one person speaking to another? Is it an elegy or a remembrance honoring the dead? Is it a lyric or an ode that meditates on a particular subject? Is it a narrative poem that tells a story?

- What is the tone, the mood, the atmosphere that the poem expresses? Does it suggest floating through the air? Is it a dirge or lament? Does it have a military beat? Does it express longing or joyful praise?
- Is the language of the poem stately, colloquial, humorous, or mysterious, or can you characterize it in another way?
- What literary techniques does the poet use (see the list in the analysis of fiction)?
- Are there important thoughts that are unexpressed in the poem, such as any background information that it assumes?
- Is it effective in generating the desired emotion, attitude, or memory in you?

Poetry traditionally utilizes the rhythm of words, called meter. The determination of meter is called scansion or scanning the lines. Traditional poetry also uses rhyme to produce a particular emotion. Rhyming can occur at the end of lines (end rhyme) or within lines (internal rhyme). Approximate rhyme uses words that sound similar but do not rhyme exactly. Blank verse has a defined rhythm but does not rhyme. Free verse does not use consistent rhyme or meter. At this point, simply take note of how the poem's use of words, rhyme, and rhythm affect you.

When you are called upon to analyze a poem, use your responses to these questions to write an essay that addresses the main points of the poem. Analysis tends to focus on the mind, but remember to include your heart-response to the poem as well.

Who, What, How, Why, and Why Not: A Primer for Literary Analysis of Fiction

People read books. Some books (think Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Jane Austen) are still widely read decades and even centuries after they were written. Many, many books (think of the highly forgettable ones you see in used book sales—over and over) are a flash in the pan or are even less noticeable. What's the difference? Is it just that most people like this book and most people dislike that one? Sort of, but it is more nuanced than that.

Literary analysis is studying the parts of a work of literature (such as plot, setting, characters, and narration) to see how the author uses them to create the overall meaning of the work as a whole. Professors, teachers, students, critics, and everyday people analyze works of literature: novels, short stories, poems, and non-fiction. They think about the story or plot of the book, how it develops, the characters in the book, the words and structure that the author uses, and other elements of the work.

People who analyze literature have developed standard methods. Primarily, this involves looking for elements that are found in most literary works. The purpose of literary analysis is to understand how a piece of literature works: how the writer constructs his or her story, and why the work affects readers the way it does.

Did you ever see yourself doing literary analysis? Does the phrase “literary analysis” make washing dishes or chopping firewood seem exciting? I understand. But it is more interesting than it might sound. Think of it as finding the answers to some big questions: “What makes a story good?” “What are the building blocks of great writing?” “Why do I keep thinking about that book and want to read it again?” “What is the difference between a book you stay up late to read and one that should be repurposed as a fire starter?” Even if you don't want to make a lifelong habit of literary analysis, as an educated person you should know the basics of how it works. It can also be kind of fun.

Literary analysis can help you appreciate the power of a work of literature. It can provide you with insights for a deeper appreciation of the next novel (or poem or history) you read. On a practical level, literary analysis is often what a classroom teacher wants students to do in order to understand a book. So literary analysis is good as long as it is a means to a good end and achieves a worthy goal. However, if literary analysis becomes an end in itself, or a way to show how much someone knows or thinks he knows about literature, or something that gets in the way of enjoying a work of literature, it no longer serves a good purpose. In other words, literary analysis has its place; but it is not the purpose of literature.

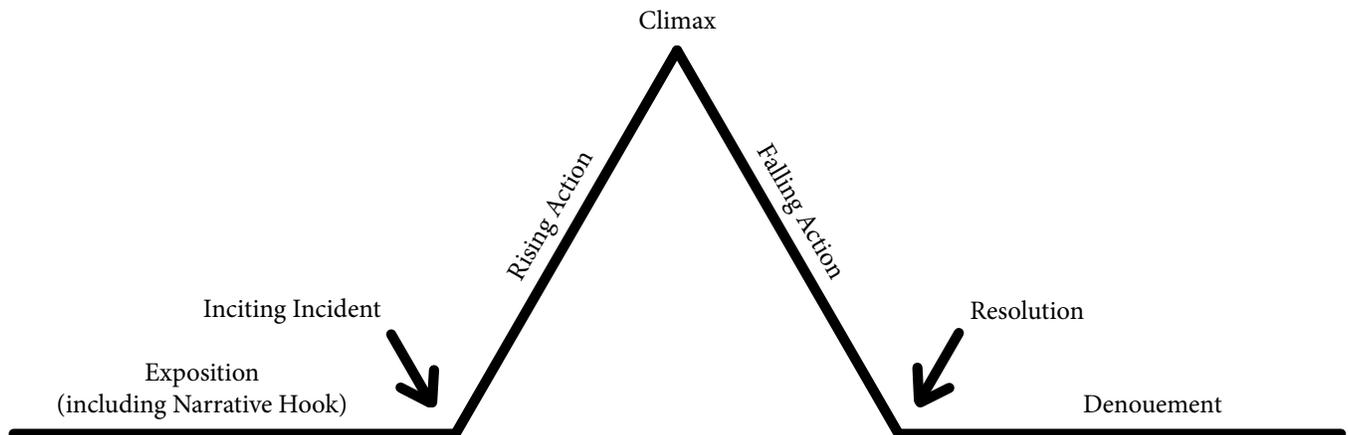
Writers do not write in order to have their work subjected to literary analysis. Nathaniel Hawthorne did not write *The Scarlet Letter*, nor did Charles Dickens write *A Tale of Two Cities*, for English teachers to analyze them to death or so that professors would have material for exams. They wrote because they had stories to tell; they wanted to connect on an emotional level with readers. These authors were successful because they did that well, and this is why their books are considered classic works of literature.

Here are some standard elements of literary analysis.

Plot

The **plot** is the story of a piece of **fiction**. Fiction is a work of imagined narrated prose, usually either a novel or a short story. The plot is what happens to make it a story.

Gustav Freytag was a nineteenth-century German novelist who found a typical pattern of plot development in Greek and Shakespearean dramas. The same pattern is found in most fictional literature. Freytag depicted it as a pyramid.



The examples below refer to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Exposition: *laying out the situation and background, introducing the characters. (Within this element will often be a **narrative hook**, an event or description that gets you interested in the story and wanting to read more.)* Four children come to stay in a professor's country home. The narrative hook is when Lucy finds a magic wardrobe in a back room and visits Narnia: what will happen next?

Inciting incident: something that gets the story moving.

Lucy meets the faun, who expresses inner conflict over what he is doing.

Rising action: building drama; each significant event is called a complication.

All four children go to Narnia, they meet the Beavers, Edmund betrays his siblings to the White Witch, and so forth.

Climax: the single key event or turning point; the moment of greatest tension.

Aslan sacrifices his life on behalf of Edmund.

Falling action: events that occur as a result of the climax.

The good and evil creatures in Narnia have a battle.

Resolution: the event in which the main issue is resolved.

Aslan's side wins. The four children are established as kings and queens.

Denouement (day-new-maw): the finishing out and tying up of the details of the story.

The four children grow up, rule Narnia, and then return to their own world.

Freytag's Pyramid is only a typical plot development. It accurately describes the plots of many pieces of fiction, but there are many variations and exceptions. Writers do not necessarily write to the Freytag Pyramid. Don't try to force a work into the pyramid if it doesn't seem to fit. In addition, people will sometimes have different ideas about what is the narrative hook, inciting incident, resolution, or even the climax in a really dramatic story.

The key question to ask about the plot of a piece of literature is, "What is the **conflict**?" What is the issue that the main character needs to resolve? Is it conflict within himself, perhaps between what he wants and what he actually has? Is it a conflict between himself and another character, or between himself and the expectations of others? Is it the conflict of wanting to reach a goal but being unable to do so? What keeps or moves the character out of stability and causes tension? The tension between Pip and Estella is one conflict in *Great Expectations*. The quest for the ring is a continuing conflict in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. A skillful writer

might have several lines of conflict in a work and interweave them into a gripping **narrative**. Conflict and struggle are how we grow as persons, so the conflict in a story is an important way for us to identify with the characters in the story.

The time, place, and social environment of a story is the **setting**. The plot unfolds in these surroundings. Is the story set among the working class of early nineteenth-century England, among fishermen of first-century Israel, among slaves in the southern United States just before the Civil War, or among homeschooling families of twenty-first century America? The setting will affect what characters know, their assumptions and aspirations, and how they act and speak. The geographic setting always impacts the development of the story: isolated mountain villagers will act and speak differently from urban dwellers. The rural and urban settings—and the conflict between them—in *Cry, the Beloved Country* are crucial to the story.

Another key element of the plot is the **structure** of the story, how it is told. A straight **chronological narrative** is simplest, but an author might want to use **flashbacks** (descriptions of events that happened earlier, out of chronological order) and **foreshadowings** (hints at things that will come later) to convey attributes of characters or particular feelings to the story.

Archetypes (ARK-eh-types) are typical or standard plot elements, such as a character on a quest, the pursuit of an elusive goal, the loss of innocence, or an initiation into a new situation. Many of the world's most famous works of literature include one or more of these elements because these situations make for a good story. Everyone goes through these times or has these dreams.

Characters and Characterization

- The **characters** are the people in a story.
- The **protagonist** is the main character of the story (Jo in *Little Women*).
- The **antagonist** is the character who works against the protagonist and provides some degree of conflict (the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*).
- The **confidant** is someone to whom a character reveals his thoughts and motives (Margaret plays this role for Bessy and Mr. Bell plays this role for Margaret in *North and South*).
- The mentor teaches another character about life (Marmee in *Little Women*).
- A **foil** is often a minor character who by being a contrast illuminates another character (for instance, the slick operator who serves to highlight the integrity of the protagonist).
- Other typical characters are the **hero** (Sir Percy Blakeney, the Scarlet Pimpernel), the **scapegoat** (Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), and the **buddy pair** (Don Quixote and Sancho Panza).
- A **round character** is three-dimensional, one whose personality is well-developed and who has some internal struggles expressed. In other words, he is believable and realistic. David Copperfield is a round character. A **flat character** is not developed in the story (Jethro in *The Cat of Bubastes*). A **stock character** portrays a stereotypical role, such as the cruel stepmother in *Cinderella*, the slow and dimwitted policeman, or the unemotional accountant. A stock character might be round or flat. A **dynamic character** changes during the story (matures or regresses, as Margaret Hale does in *North and South*), while a **static character** does not change (Fanny in *North and South*). A good author uses each character to advance the story in some way, not just to clutter the pages.

Characterization is the way that the author reveals the nature and personality of the characters. This is how the author makes a character real. What do you learn about a character in the course of the story? How do you learn about him or her? The narrator might tell the reader about a character (**direct characterization**), or the author might reveal a character's attributes by what the character says or does (**indirect characterization**). Typical methods of indirect characterization include a character's actions and his effect on others, a character's dress and appearance, how he talks and what he says, and the thoughts he reveals. The author might convey information about a character through his interactions with others, by what others say about the character, or by discrepancies between the character's reputation and his real actions or between what he says and what he does. A narrator (and through the narrator the author) might express an evaluation of a character by comments he or she makes. If a character grows or changes, how does the author show this: insights that she gains, experiences that teach her lessons, or by demonstrating different ways of acting or speaking over the course of the story?

Conflict within a character or between characters can be distinct from conflict in the story. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, for example, the conflict between the Defarges and the other French revolutionaries on one hand and the French aristocracy on the other is different from the conflict within Sydney Carton himself. What does a character do about conflict? Does he try to escape it, does he repress it, or does he address it?

Narrative

The Narrator. Who is telling the story? One key element of the narrative is the point of view of the narrator. The narrator might be **first person**, a character in the story. A first person narrator might be a major or a minor character in the story. The character David Copperfield is the first person narrator of the Charles Dickens novel by that name; the first-person narrator Ishmael in *Moby Dick* is a relatively minor character in that book. A narrator might be **third person**, one who is not a character in the story. The narrator might be **omniscient**, meaning that he or she knows the thoughts and motives of each character, or he might be **limited omniscient**, knowing the thoughts and motives of just one person. A narrator might be **objective**, not knowing anything about the inner thoughts of the characters except what the characters themselves reveal. One way to describe an objective narrator is that he knows and conveys only what a camera sees. A rare form of narration is **second person**, by which the author describes the reader himself going through the events of the story. Another rare form of narration is the **stream of consciousness** approach, in which the narrator relates the jumble of his own (or one character's own) thoughts as they occur to him. William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is told in a stream of consciousness approach.

An author chooses the narrative approach for a reason. In *Great Expectations*, the reader has much more sympathy for Pip, the main character and first person narrator, than he would if the story were told by a third person narrator, although Dickens used third person narrators in many of his works.

Narrative Mood. What is the **mood** or **tone** of the narration? Is the narrator light-hearted, angry, skeptical, condescending, or sad and defeated? The mood of the characters might be different from the tone the author conveys. The characters might be harsh and judgmental, but the narrator could be sympathetic to the victims of the harshness. Simon Legree is a harsh character in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; but the author/narrator Harriet Beecher Stowe is sympathetic to Tom, the target of Simon's harshness. The author might have an agenda or cause he is trying to get across through the way the book is narrated. A rare approach is the unreliable narrator

who is so prejudiced that the reader cannot trust what the narrator says and has to filter what the narrator says to determine the truth. It is possible for an author to have a tone or agenda that is different from the tone or agenda of the narrator. For instance, the author might want to condemn the lifestyle of the rich and famous. To do so he makes the narrator so fawning toward and accepting of the rich and famous that it turns the reader off. This is a subtle form of sarcasm as a tone.

Narrative Style. An author will use a particular **style**, such as formal or colloquial language, or take a logical or emotional approach to the story. Does the author use **dialog**, which is the recording of direct quotes of conversations between characters, to advance the story?

Literary Techniques. How does the author use words to tell his story? He has several tools at his disposal.

- **Imagery** is using descriptive language to convey appearance or other attributes. It is painting pictures with words. Compare “We walked between two large rocks and came to a big field” to “The narrow passage between the towering cliffs opened into a meadow lush with wildflowers.”
- **Simile** is a comparison using like or as. “His encouragement was like a breath of fresh air to me.”
- **Metaphor** is a comparison in which one thing is said to be another. “You are a rock of stability to me.”
- **Symbolism** is the use of one thing to represent another. Literature often uses **archetypal symbols** to convey certain ideas: night often portrays mystery or evil; a mountain can represent an obstacle to overcome; winter and spring can represent death and rebirth.
- **Allegory** is an extended comparison, in which every or almost every character or event represents something else. *Animal Farm* is an allegory of the Russian Revolution.
- **Apostrophe** is addressing someone who is not present or something that is not human. “Caesar, thou art revenged” (from *Julius Caesar*, spoken after Caesar was dead).
- **Synecdoche** (suh-NEK-doh-key) is using a part for the whole. “Ten thousand feet marched down the street to an endless beat of drums” (people marched, not just feet).
- **Metonymy** (meh-TONN-eh-mi) is substituting one term for another because of the close association between the two. “The White House announced a new economic stimulus package today” (meaning the President or an administration official did so, not the physical structure at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.).
- **Hyperbole** is intentional overstatement. “I think of you a million times a day.”
- **Litotes** (LIH-tuh-teez) is intentional understatement. “His donation to the charity was not insignificant” (meaning it was significant).
- **Irony** is a contrast between appearance and reality. Irony can be situational (a man proposing marriage to a woman in a comical setting such as being stuck in an elevator, or characters trying to keep from laughing out loud in a quiet museum), verbal (one character doing something foolish and another character saying the opposite, such as, “That was an intelligent thing to do!”), or dramatic (the reader knows more than the character does, so the reader knows that it is ironic that the character is doing this because it is fruitless or dangerous).

- **Oxymoron** (ox-ee-MORE-on) is a contradiction in terms. “The silence was deafening.”
- **Paradox** is a phrase or statement that appears to be contradictory but in fact might convey a deep truth. “I know that I know nothing at all.”
- **Antithesis** is putting together two opposite ideas to achieve the effect of a contrast. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”
- **Personification** is the giving of human traits to non-human things. “The trees waited eagerly for the rising of the sun.”
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of the same initial verbal sound. “Billy bounced a ball by the backyard barbecue.” To be more specific: assonance is the repetition of the same vowel sound; consonance is the repetition of the same consonant sound. Alliteration gives rhythm to a statement or phrase that can increase its emotional impact. “And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting/On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door.”

Topic and Theme. A book will usually have a topic and a theme. These are two different attributes even though they sound similar. A **topic** is a brief description of the book, such as, “The French Revolution,” “How Lenin’s Communist Russia operated,” or “Life in a nineteenth-century English factory town.” A **theme** can usually be stated in one sentence and often expresses a universal idea that the story conveys. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is about redemption, making something good out of something bad. The theme of *North and South* is prejudice.

How does the author deal with the conflict and the theme? The author might convey his belief that the conflict is a result of the protagonist’s outdated or irrational mindset; if the character would be more open-minded, he would not have this conflict. The theme might be the privilege of the wealthy, which the author approaches with sarcasm because he thinks the wealthy ought not to have such privilege.

Your Response to the Story

As you read a work of literature, whether fiction, poetry, or non-fiction, interact with the text. Even more, interact with what the text is saying about life, or history, or whatever the topic is, and what the text says to you and about you. Are the plot and characters realistic and plausible? If they are unreal, does the author intend for them to be unreal and does this approach work? How are the characters products of their time and place and social setting and how do they transcend their setting? What is especially meaningful to you in terms of particular scenes, characters, dialog, or overall impact? How does the story make you feel, which is different from what you think about it? How does it make a difference for you?

Literary analysis is helpful when it clarifies how the author constructed the work. You can more deeply appreciate what he or she did and how the work conveys the intended message and mood. However, literary analysis can sometimes be emphasized to the point of making it seem more important than the work itself; and an analyst can come up with ideas about a work that the author never had in mind. Much of literary analysis is and should be subconscious on the part of the reader, the way we enjoy a good meal without over-analyzing all of the individual ingredients (although you should compliment the cook, and, if you are interested, ask how he or she prepared it). As you give thought to literary analysis, you can better appreciate the mental feast offered to you by what you read.

The Great Story

It's what we all want, whether we realize it or not. We want our lives to matter. We want to believe that our lives amount to something in spite of our mistakes and failures. We want to overcome hardships and rebound from setbacks. We want to find something good in the bad things that happen.

We call it redemption. It's the athlete who comes back from a terrible season and leads his team to the championship. It's the man who recovers from addiction or bankruptcy and accomplishes good. It chokes us up in a movie or brings forth a tear as we read a book.

Redemption is one of the great themes in literature; some might say it's the only real theme in literature. It's the story of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. It's Anne of Green Gables achieving success after almost not being able to stay with Matthew and Marilla. It's the reason why the parable of the prodigal son is so powerful.

The real, true, greatest story of redemption is the story of Jesus Christ. He gave Himself to redeem mankind from sin. God redeemed the terrible cross by making it the beautiful means of salvation. God redeems us by taking our sinful, broken lives and making something worthwhile out of them: we become His children. The cross is the ultimate story of God bringing good from something bad.

Redemption is at the heart of the entire story of Scripture. God redeems Israel from slavery in Egypt. He redeems the Jewish captives of Babylon from bondage. He predicts that one day the Suffering Servant would bear the sins of all and set us free. The story of the Old Testament points toward and is fulfilled in Christ. Redemption is what is so beautiful and powerful about the gospel: what we long for so desperately Christ accomplishes. We can know that we do indeed matter enough that the Son of God died for us. We can be saved, reconciled, redeemed.

As you read a book, whether fiction or nonfiction, look for the story of redemption. When a main character rises to the occasion, completes a journey, or turns out better than it looked as though he would, that's redemption. We want people to turn out to be winners because that's what we want to be. In Jesus, we are.

Know Why You Believe

Paul Little

If someone has taught you the truths of the gospel, thank God for that. They have given you a great gift. To face life from the perspective of faith is to live with the strongest foundation you can have. In *Know Why You Believe*, Paul Little does you a service by collecting in one place the reasons why faith is a logical and reasonable position.

Little also provides a service to those who don't have a foundation of faith. Not everyone—not even everyone in America—grows up with this foundation. Many voices in our culture express skepticism about Christianity. For those who hear these voices and have questions about the Christian faith, Little offers solid, carefully researched answers that will point people in the direction of faith.

A long-time staff member of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a parachurch organization that ministers primarily to college students, Little heard many questions from students, but they generally boiled down to the twelve that are the chapters in this book. Little wrote the book to extend his ministry to those with whom he could not converse personally. He provides the evidence, but he also notes that faith is a decision of the will and not just a matter of being convinced in the mind.

Christian apologetics is not what it might sound like. It is not an apology for believing in Jesus. Instead, the term comes from the Greek word that means speaking in one's own defense. Apologetics is a discipline that presents carefully reasoned arguments in defense of the truthfulness of Christianity. A term that has a similar meaning is Christian evidences.

Know Why You Believe informs and supports a Christian worldview. As we say many times in this curriculum, your worldview has a profound impact on your life. There is a real and significant difference between living on the basis of a Christian worldview and living on the basis of uncertainty, skepticism, or outright rejection of Christ. *Know Why You Believe* provides answers for all those who seek the truth.

Having said this, however, we need to point out what we believe are a couple of weak points in the book. The first is Chapter 9, "Do Science and Scripture Agree?" The chapter makes some good points. For instance, Little is justly critical of what he calls "scientism," the idea that anything contemporary scientists say must be true. We have seen the "assured findings of science" change so often that to believe the most recent scientific conclusions or assumptions are the final word is short-sighted. He also correctly points out that theistic evolution assumes that the intelligent, rational God uses an illogical, irrational, chance-based process of evolution, which simply does not make sense.

However, when Little introduces the subjects of science and Scripture at the first of the chapter, he says, "No doubt there is conflict." He seems to be referring to conflict between some scientists and some religionists. Scripture is true and scientific reality is true, and truth does not conflict with truth.

Little appropriately supports the idea of microevolution, within kinds. However, he speaks of mutations as potentially helpful or favorable. Experience has shown that at least some mutations are harmful.

He seems to support the idea that we must “remain agnostic” about the age of the earth. Agnosticism not only says that we don’t know but that we cannot know. Evidence for a young earth exists that we can know, but the book does not deal adequately with it.

Little mentions a 1992 announcement that scientists had found “stunning confirmation” of a big bang creation event, but he does not give details of it. This sounds like a claim made in the media (claims which are notoriously sensational and inexact), and whatever it was certainly did not end the controversy. Moreover, the supposed claim did not deal with the question of what banged, that is, the origin of the dense material that supposedly exploded. Even if you assumed a big bang, the first and most vital question is how something arose from nothing; for that to happen requires a Creator. No “big bang” theory addresses this question.

Little ends the chapter by saying that “science and Scripture show some signs of becoming strong allies.” Scientific fact and Scripture properly interpreted have always been and always will be strong allies. Little’s discussion in this chapter shows that someone can be right about a lot of things—which he is in the book as a whole—but miss it on some issues. We can all grow in our understanding of God’s truth. If nothing else, these passages can help you define and sharpen your positions on these matters.

The second weak point comes at the very end of the book, in Little’s description of the young man who was “stuck between the screen door and the real door” in terms of coming to faith in Jesus. The young man’s prayer moved him an important step closer to Jesus, but nowhere in the New Testament is anyone told to pray a little prayer in order to be saved. Jesus calls people to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. Calls to respond to the gospel that Christians proclaim in the book of Acts—certainly based on faith and resting in the grace of God—speak of repentance, confession, baptism, and a change of lifestyle and worldview. Becoming a Christian, a disciple of Jesus, goes much deeper than intellectual assent to the truth of Jesus or even the admission of a need for Jesus. Jesus does not call people to a minimum essentials religion—whatever it takes to get by—but to a decision to be all in, responding to His word as Lord.

However, these two weaknesses in the book do not take away the value of the book as a whole in presenting an effective apologetic for why faith is not just a possible choice but a compelling one and the best one. Believers always have room to grow in understanding why their faith is reasonable, logical, and defensible.

Content Questions

1. What was the main group of people Paul E. Little worked with and ministered to?
2. What is one of the evidences for the existence of God discussed in Chapter 2?
3. What historical event in the New Testament does Little say is the foundation stone of the Christian faith?
4. What have modern archaeological discoveries shown about the Bible?
5. Does Little agree with the statement, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe it?”

Analysis Questions

1. What is one of the questions in this book that you have wondered about before? How helpful was Little’s answer to your question?
2. What is one question or topic in the book that you would like to delve into further? What would be some good sources for information on the topic?
3. Why is it important for a person to know why they believe what they believe?

Blood Brothers

Elias Chacour with David Hazard

Blood Brothers centers on a topic close to the heart of many people. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict matters to Christians, to Jews, and to Muslims. The topic is fraught with controversy, a long and tragic history, and strong opinions.

Blood Brothers includes the timeline of Israel's recent history. After the Holocaust, Jews sought a secure place to live in their historic homeland of Canaan. But that was a country with a population: Palestine of the Palestinians. Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived there together. With support from many powerful countries of the world, Jewish Zionists declared the nation of Israel in Palestine in 1949. The army of Israel forcibly removed Palestine's residents. Some Palestinians defended their homeland. Israelis and Palestinians, each supported by other countries and groups, have continued to battle over the land ever since.

Blood Brothers presents a point of view we seldom hear in this ongoing, heated, violent debate. Elias Chacour is a Palestinian Christian who has lived through this timeline of turbulence in the land of his birth. Instead of taking one of the usual sides in the conflict—"We must support the Jews" or "We must support the Palestinians"—Chacour says we must support and defend human beings; we must live out the call of Christ to be peacemakers.

Blood Brothers deepens our understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in several ways. It even defies an easy categorization of the kind of book it is. It would be well-placed in multiple sections of the library.

We wouldn't be surprised to find *Blood Brothers* in the biography section since it is the life story of Elias Chacour. His life did not start out like one destined to be written about. He was the youngest of many children in a farming family in a tiny out-of-the-way village of Galilee. Yet he was born at a pivotal time for his people, the Palestinians. His earliest years were marked with the peace and security his family had enjoyed for generations until their world was violently and permanently shattered with the creation of the state of Israel. His entire life since has been a path of finding a home, finding the way of forgiveness and understanding, becoming a voice for his people, ministering to people of all races and faiths, and building bridges of reconciliation. From his humble start, Elias Chacour grew into his special calling in the kingdom of God.

Blood Brothers also belongs with non-fiction books on the history of the Middle East. The purpose of *Blood Brothers* is not for you to get acquainted with the life of one particular man. His autobiography broadens our understanding because his life and events in the Middle East have overlapped and shaped each other. He doesn't have information, theories, and knowledge about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He has memories, wounds, loved ones, and dreams within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He can tell us about government leaders lying, villages razed, and family members rounded up, not from reading, interviewing, and digging documents out of libraries, but because he was the one that was lied to, it was his village that was razed, and it was his family members who were rounded up.

Blood Brothers would be equally at home among books about the Christian life. *Blood Brothers* includes a brief discussion on Biblical prophecies regarding one of the most hotly-contested sections of the globe. Perhaps Chacour's view on Biblical prophecy helped to clarify what you've found confusing. Or maybe you disagree with his interpretation. Many Christians who study the Bible and seek to understand truth will find points of disagreement about the interpretation

of those prophecies. However, there's another part of the Bible we can all agree applies to the story. Chacour devoted much more space and placed much more significance on the part of the Bible that says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God," and "Love your enemies." The radical, simple, profound, and life-altering message Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount brings us not to bitter debate but to humbled silence. Michael Chacour, Elias's father, took Jesus absolutely at His word and taught his family to do the same. The cost was great for Michael Chacour and every member of his family. As willing servants of God, their interpretation of Scripture led them on a path of sacrifice, patience, and faith.

Blood Brothers is autobiography, history, and teaching on the Christian life. And yet it is more. Chacour did not write it to leave you thinking, "That was interesting," "Hmm, I never knew all that happened," nor "Wow, what an amazing man." It was written as a call to search your own soul, a call to think through your own assumptions and misunderstandings, and a call to apply what you've learned to your own convictions and actions. Elias Chacour seeks allies in his battle against false assumptions, bitterness, and hate. The message of *Blood Brothers* speaks to every follower of Christ. Our goal must not be to find "the easy life of blindness to pain," as Elias Chacour wrote. *Blood Brothers* calls us to serve God in and through bitter conflict, losses, and pain, and to love our neighbor, no matter the cost.

Content Questions

1. What kind of work did Elias Chacour's family do in their village of Biram?
2. What was Michael Chacour's reaction when his fig orchard was taken from him?
3. Why did Elias Chacour's parents take him to Haifa when he was twelve years old?
4. What was the purpose of the Zionist movement?
5. Why did Elias change his mind and choose not to accept offers to work in Europe?

Analysis Questions

1. What principles of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation did Elias see modeled in his parents?
2. What different reactions do Palestinians in the book have toward the conflict with Jews and their own loss and displacement?
3. How would you describe Elias Chacour's worldview?

Patricia St. John Tells Her Own Story

Why would someone write an autobiography? The possibilities are infinite. Some write to record history as they witnessed it. Some hope they will not be forgotten. Some write to correct false reports. Some wish to record their thoughts and memories for their descendants. Some are bursting with adventures begging to be told. Some might wish to share life lessons learned the hard way to give someone else a head start. Some might want to give honor to other people who shaped their lives. Some write with pride in their own accomplishment.

An author's motivation in writing comes through in what they say and how they say it. It is appropriate to raise an eyebrow when an author of an autobiography is the hero of every adventure. It is worth a fact-check when the author "corrects" a widely-held understanding. It is good to remember that a person's memory is one-sided and selective. And it's easy for an author to skip over their most unflattering moments and unwise decisions. Though we try to be subtle and balanced, our biases and agenda will always come through. It's a good habit to ask of an author, "Is this a person I can trust? Why or why not?"

Why did Patricia St. John tell her own story? Hers was a remarkable journey, a life unparalleled. Her legacy continues as succeeding generations of children and their parents discover her books inspired by people and places that she knew. Yet she didn't seem to see herself as a heroic missionary warrior, a builder of a world-changing legacy. She shares her memories as a humble, normal person, serving where she was called to serve. She was simply herself in a wide variety of circumstances, from the ordinary to the extraordinary. She was joyfully aware that her story was authored by the Creator of all. Her own journey pointed to His truth and glory with every step. She also shared the Lord's work in the lives of her parents, siblings, and extended family. Patricia St. John's autobiography points continually to the One to whom she gave her life to serve and glorify.

What do you think she would want you to take away from her book? Patricia St. John saw and loved individual people. In her countless one-on-one encounters across the globe, she wanted each person to know of God's love through the gospel. Every reader of her book essentially has the privilege of a conversation with this genuine person. Does her faith help you know the Lord better? Do her stories help you see that you can trust Him? Does she inspire you to think of how you might serve where the Lord has placed you?

Content Questions

1. To what continent did Patricia St. John's parents go as missionaries right after they were married?
2. What difficult decision did Patricia's parents make right before she was born?
3. Where was Patricia St. John's brother working when she joined him in foreign ministry?
4. Patricia and her sister traveled from Beirut to North Africa to retrace the journeys of what man?
5. In what country did Patricia St. John spend the last years of her life?

Analysis Questions

1. How did Patricia St. John's worldview shape her life priorities?
2. What are three God-given gifts you notice in Patricia St. John that furthered her ministry?
3. At what time and place in her story would you most like to drop in and visit her or join her journey? Why?

A Long Walk to Water

Linda Sue Park

A Long Walk to Water has two parallel narratives that eventually intersect: the story of Nya and the story of Salva Dut. Also, though the book is written as fiction, the narrative of Salva Dut is based on a real person and his real experiences. The author organized the information and events of Salva Dut's life into a story. Almost every story has a plot, or a chronology in which the events unfold.

In the following analysis, we will look at *A Long Walk to Water* (specifically the narrative of Salva Dut) through the lens of Freytag's Pyramid, which you read about on page 6. Below are the elements of plot according to Freytag's Pyramid. Refer back to the diagram and definitions for Freytag's Pyramid as we look at each element and how the author uses it in *A Long Walk to Water*.

Exposition: laying out the situation and background, introducing the characters.

Look at pages 1-4 of *A Long Walk to Water*. Write down at least three things the author tells us to help us quickly get to know Salva Dut and the life he leads?

Inciting incident: something that gets the story moving.

Look at the lower half of page 5 and upper half of page 6 in *A Long Walk to Water*. How would you describe in one sentence this event that serves as the story's inciting incident?

Rising action: building drama; each significant event is called a complication.

Chapters 2-13 (pages 8-82) in *A Long Walk to Water* contain the rising action of Salva Dut's story. This section includes Salva's long journeys on foot to refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. It covers many years, includes some of the important people he met along the way, and tells of the many times when his life was spared. Flip briefly through this section to jog your memory. Write down three significant events from the rising action.

Climax: the single key event or turning point; the moment of greatest tension.

What was the turning point in *A Long Walk to Water*? What happened that changed Salva Dut's life completely? (Hint: See page 89.) Write one to two sentences explaining how the climax turned the story in a different direction.

Falling action: events that occur as a result of the climax.

As a result of the climax, Salva comes to live in the United States. How would you summarize Salva's adjustment to the United States in one to two sentences?

Resolution: the event in which the main issue is resolved.

In *A Long Walk to Water*, the resolution brings together Salva's background in Sudan, the new opportunities he had after moving to the United States, and his dream to find a way to help his countrymen. The resolution for Salva was also the resolution for Nya and her village. What happened that provided the resolution for both parallel narratives? Summarize this in one to two sentences.

Denouement (day-new-maw): the finishing out and tying up of the details of the story.

In the denouement of *A Long Walk to Water*, we learn of a chain of good effects that will come to Nya's village because of the well. See page 113. How would you describe the book's message of hope and redemption?

The Day the World Stopped Turning

Michael Morpurgo

Author Michael Morpurgo set his beautiful novel *The Day the World Stopped Turning* in a real place: the Camargue region in the south of France. The Camargue is not a place that we hear about often. It's not top of mind for most travel lists. The shroud of mystery and wonder about this corner of the world makes the book more effective. Flamingos in France? What is this place?

The setting is essential to the way the story unfolds. Though the characters are fictitious, they live in a place that is real. They also have experiences parallel to many real ones during World War II. This helps to make the characters, and the book, relatable and believable.

Morpurgo dynamically used the setting of *The Day the World Stopped Turning* like another important character in the story. Weather, bodies of water, landforms, old buildings, music of wind and birds, lights of daytime and nighttime all play a part in what happens and can't be ignored. The events of *The Day the World Stopped Turning* could not happen anywhere else than the Camargue.

Look at a map of France and find the city of Arles. It is south of Avignon, between Montpellier and Marseille near the Mediterranean Coast. Arles is the gateway to the river delta formed by the Rhône. The Grand Rhône continues its southbound journey past Arles while the Petit Rhône branches off to the west, then south. The delta between these arms of the Rhône is the Camargue.

The human population of the Camargue is sparse, surrounded by carefully preserved natural beauty. Camargue farmers raise a famous black cattle for racing, bull fighting, and food production. Marshy rice fields wave in the wind that comes from the sea. Manmade ponds for extracting salt flash rosy pink in the bright sun, white Camargue horses gallop over the open land, sharing the unspoiled country with four hundred different kinds of birds, including flamingos.

From the beginning of *The Day the World Stopped Turning*, the Camargue pulls us into the story. Vincent, narrator of the book, was drawn to the region by a beautiful Van Gogh painting that hung over his bed.

Vincent Van Gogh made his home in the Camargue region from February 1888 to May 1889. This period was the most productive of his life, with an output of three hundred paintings and drawings. Some of Van Gogh's best work as an artist captures life in the Camargue at a particular moment in time, as well as the natural beauty that remains unchanged.

In the book, Vincent (the narrator) makes his way to the Camargue as a visitor and accidentally becomes involved in the lives of two of the region's lifelong residents, Lorenzo and Kezia. Morpurgo uses an intriguing device to tell the story. Vincent doesn't actually tell it; the book is mostly long monologues by Kezia. Since she experienced the story, hearing it from her gives a much more personal touch. We hear it as Vincent heard it: observers from the outside whom the story draws into its beauty and warmth.

Lorenzo's family had their own piece of the Camargue, a small farm near the village of Aigues-Mortes (a real place). Lorenzo's family raises the black bulls and white horses the Camargue is famous for, in addition to other farming on a small scale.

Kezia's family is Roma, a people sometimes known as gypsy. Her family drew their livelihood from a carousel they transported and set up all over the Camargue. Kezia's home was the traditional caravan of her people.

Many things have not changed since the fictional Kezia and Lorenzo grew up in the Camargue. Farming is still a vital part of the fabric of life. Many Roma still make their home in the Camargue. Every year, thousands of Roma from all over Europe gather for a big festival and religious pilgrimage at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, as Kezia mentions on page 273 of *The Day the World Stopped Turning*.

In the story, Lorenzo, Kezia, and their parents, who belong to the Camargue, stand in sharp contrast to the German soldiers who invade it. War and its destruction moved out in an ever-wider circle, eclipsing even quiet, remote places. It feels jolting that a beautiful, isolated, unspoiled place was liable to invasion and desecration. The German soldiers with their battlements, camps, weapons, and uniforms never blend with the landscape. They always stand out, never belonging. The ancient rhythms of the Camargue had to hold their breath for a few terrible years. In the end, the German army left, defeated. The Camargue remained. The farms, the villages, the birds, the sea continued their ancient rhythms. But the war left its marks.

Kezia and Lorenzo and their parents carried on after the war, but bore scars. They did the work of putting their lives together and moving forward, like the rebuilt carousel. There was healing, hope and purpose, in returning to the pattern of work on the farm and going from village to village to operate the carousel. They lived, worked and grew older in the place where they had always belonged.

Redemption plays a part in the story. The storm that destroys the carousel could symbolize the storm of war that destroys the community. But Kezia's father is sure that they can rebuild the carousel and it will work again one day, as people pick up their lives after the war. Papa hates the Germans, but the caporal's assistance with the carousel and his warnings to the Roma people redeem him in the eyes of Kezia's and Lorenzo's families.

At the end of the story, Vincent, the narrator, chooses to stay. He puts down roots and comes to belong to Kezia, Lorenzo, and their Camargue. On every page of *The Day the World Stopped Turning*, place matters, not just as a backdrop, but as a character in the story.

Content Questions:

1. How would you describe Lorenzo?
2. How did Kezia first get to know the Sully family well?
3. Why did Kezia's family need to hide on the Sully's farm?
4. What story do Lorenzo and Kezia act out at the castle?
5. What joint project did Kezia's and Lorenzo's families work on together for years?

Analysis Questions:

1. How would you explain the meaning of the book's title?
2. How would you describe the worldview of the character Willi Brenner?
3. What place or places have meaning in the story of your life?

Kidnapped

Robert Louis Stevenson

Note to Student: You will read the following before reading *Kidnapped* to help you understand the historical background to the book. The questions that follow are for you to answer after you have read *Kidnapped*.

Evil uncles, lost fortunes, shipboard kidnappings, chases through the Highlands, befriending wanted men: Robert Louis Stevenson knew how to write a page-turner. He crafted *Kidnapped* with a mix of history and fiction set in his native Scotland.

Kidnapped takes place in 1751. The protagonist and narrator, David Balfour, was Stevenson's own creation. Alan Breck Stewart, another key character, was a real person. Several other real people come into the story amongst fictitious characters. The subtitle of the book makes it sound like a true autobiography, but this was a literary device.

Woven in and around the adventure, is a complicated historical timeline that can leave modern readers rather muddled. Don't let that stop you from enjoying the thrilling journey that is *Kidnapped*. We're here to help.

Kidnapped was published in 1886, which is a long time after 1751. Nonetheless, the watershed historical events surrounding the story would have been well known to most contemporary readers. Therefore, Stevenson did not feel the need to explain the background of what was going on. Imagine an historical novel based in the time of the American Revolution or Civil War. The author would not necessarily explain the historical/political big picture, nor what had led up to the current state of affairs. However, twenty-first century readers might not be quite as familiar with Jacobites, Whigs, Glorious Revolutions, and Scottish clan politics as Stevenson's first readers were. Therefore, we humbly submit to you a crash course in the above for your better enjoyment of *Kidnapped*. Bear with us. Here goes:

King James II succeeded the throne of England, Scotland, and Ireland in 1685. He was Catholic. The majority of his subjects were Protestant, so he was unpopular. They feared an eventual religious and political takeover by the Catholic Church.

In June 1688, seven English leaders sent a message to William of Orange, a Protestant from the Netherlands, asking him to come and take the English crown. William was not only James II's son-in-law (his wife was Mary, daughter of James II), he was also the nephew of James II. (European royalty was a tight-knit family in those days . . . or not.) Ironically, William of Orange was already planning an invasion of England. His personal motive was to get England involved in his current war with France.

William arrived in England in November 1688 with an impressive fighting force. King James II planned to resist, but his remaining allies and support evaporated quickly. He fled the country in December 1688.

The English Parliament offered the crown to William and Mary jointly. This is known in history books as the Glorious Revolution. Of course "glorious" depends on your point of view. It's also called the Bloodless Revolution; but no matter your point of view, it wasn't.

Many people in Scotland did not approve of this business of a new king. Those who supported the ousted King James II were called Jacobites. In Latin, James is "Jacobus." (Yes, they were trying to confuse us.) Scotsmen who supported William and Mary were called Whigs. With us so far?

The Jacobites first clashed with King William's army in 1689. The Jacobites prevailed, but their leader, Viscount Dundee, died in the battle. Without a leader, the Jacobite movement quieted for a while.

The Scots meanwhile accumulated plenty more reasons to dislike England. This fueled another rise of the Jacobite cause. France (sharing Scotland's aversion to England) realized that supporting the Jacobites was a perfect opportunity to take a swing at England. James II had died in France in 1701. His son, also named James (sorry), was nicknamed the "Old Pretender." France attempted to bring him to Scotland and incite a wide-scale rebellion in 1708. But . . . it didn't work.

In 1715, Jacobites attempted another rebellion. Many Scots were still frustrated at their treatment by the English. Jacobites fought another battle with English forces and were again defeated.

In 1719, Spain tried to bring down England by getting in league with the Jacobites. Again, the English had no trouble squashing the rebellion.

Enter the most famous Jacobite: Charles Edward, aka the "Young Pretender," aka "Bonnie Prince Charlie." He was the grandson of James II. (Remember? The Catholic king whom William and Mary replaced in 1688?) Bonnie Prince Charlie left France and landed in Scotland with about twelve men in 1745. Soon thousands of Jacobites rallied to his side. They soon had control of Scotland. The Jacobites attempted to advance upon England to disastrous results. The English army decisively routed the Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden.

Bonnie Prince Charlie escaped into the Highlands where he was chased by the English army until he managed to escape in 1746. The Jacobites had suffered their final defeat. Hard feelings broiled between Jacobites and Whigs and between Jacobites and the English.

The English crown was determined to crush the Jacobite cause once and for all. The army rounded up Jacobites to be imprisoned or executed. Landowners lost their estates. The entire clan system changed as chiefs lost their power and their weapons. Even the distinctive clothing and instruments that represented Scotland and its ancient clans were outlawed. England stationed soldiers to make sure the Jacobites did not rise again. Scotland was changed forever.

As David Balfour (the fictional hero of *Kidnapped*) learned, 1751 was an interesting time to find oneself in Scotland. The failure of the last Jacobite rebellion was fresh news. Bonnie Prince Charlie had practically just left. Jacobite supporters were in real danger. With so many factions and everything in upheaval, it was hard to know who to trust.

There's one more thing you need to know about before you can go forth and read the book confidently educated: an incident famous in Scottish history known as The Appin Murder. Robert Louis Stevenson was fascinated by this story and built *Kidnapped* around it. Here's what happened: The Campbell clan were Whigs, loyal to the king of England. Their immediate neighbors were Jacobites who considered the Campbells to be traitors to Scotland. Alan Breck Stewart (the real person/character in the book) stirred up his clan, the Stewarts, against the Campbells. Colin Campbell, aka "The Red Fox," was a leader loyal to the English crown who had the unwelcome task of collecting taxes and evicting Jacobites from their land. On May 14, 1752, Colin Campbell was shot in the back as he rode along a quiet Highland road near the town of Appin. We'll stop here because: no spoilers!

Content Questions:

1. How did English-born David Balfour end up in Scotland?
2. What adjectives would you use to describe Alan Breck Stewart's personality?
3. How would you describe the mood of the people in the Highlands at the time of the story?

4. What was the origin of David's father's quarrel with his brother Ebenezer?
5. How would you write a synopsis of *Kidnapped* in three or four sentences?

Analysis Questions:

1. What are some ways loyalty, or lack thereof, is explored in *Kidnapped*?
2. Choose one of the story's villains and explain what you think were his motivations to act the way he did.
3. Why do you think David and Alan Breck Stewart became friends and journeyed together?

Lost in the Barrens

Farley Mowat

Survival Story with a Message

Author and activist Farley Mowat had a special connection to and respect for the land and people of Canada's Far North. This land and people were largely forgotten, ignored, and misunderstood by many in the rest of the world. Farley Mowat had a message: Respect these people and their land. Take care of them. Don't destroy them. Most of his books offer this same message in a different way. *Lost in the Barrens* conveys this message in the form of an absorbing fictional survival adventure.

In addition to helping those outside to better understand and respect the Far North, *Lost in the Barrens* explores relationships between different groups of people who live there.

Awasin and Jamie are the characters we get to know the best. Awasin is Cree. Jamie is of European descent and grew up in Toronto. They appreciate and respect each other from the start, but over the course of their ordeal, they rely on one another's individual strengths and skills and learn from each other's values and traditions.

The Chipewayans seek help from their ancient enemies, the Cree. The Cree sacrifice to help the Chipewayans in their time of need.

Supposed danger from the "Eskimo" people is a theme throughout the story. People seem to fear meeting them above any other danger. The boys and their community learn by accident that these fears are unfounded. Furthermore, the "Eskimo" are the means of Jamie and Awasin's rescue.

Jamie and his uncle are able to help Peetyuk come to understand his late father and connect with his father's way of life.

Alongside the book's characters, we learn that stereotypes, reputation, and our own fears about others do not always hold true.

Note on the Word "Eskimo"

The word "Eskimo" has long been a common general term for indigenous people who live in the far northern parts of the world. Farley Mowat was not intending to use the term in a derogatory manner when he published *Lost in the Barrens* in 1956. "Eskimo" is still a familiar term today, but it is growing less common as most people who are native to the region prefer

other names. Because many different people groups live in the arctic region, it is best to use their own tribal names, such as Inuit, Yupik, and Alutiiq.

Crafting a Survival Story

People apparently enjoy survival stories. We keep reading them: everything from classics like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson* to the latest “amazing true story” bestseller. It’s a popular theme for movies and TV shows, too, both fact and fiction. We love holding our breath as a series of unfortunate events cuts people off from civilization and they crack the code of survival. It’s fun to imagine (from a comfortable armchair) what it would be like to fend for ourselves with next-to-nothing. We like to ask each other hypothetical desert-island questions about what one person, two foods, three tools, four movies, or five books we would take.

Survival stories contain several common elements that lead us into the story, keep us riveted, and resolve the situation in the end. The following chart contains three columns for you to fill in. In the first column, briefly explain how this element was used in *Lost in the Barrens*. In the other two columns, you’ll create ideas for two different survival stories from your own imagination. Make one realistic and one fantasy (Silly? Epic? Mysterious? Allegorical? Your choice.) Want to take your ideas and write a survival story or two later? Go for it!

Survival Story Elements

Create a chart on a separate piece of paper or visit notgrass.com/ewglinks to download the chart we designed. It should have four columns and fifteen rows. The columns should have the headers as shown and each row should have one of the questions from the list below.

Survival Story Elements	How is it used in <i>Lost in the Barrens</i>?	How could it be used in your own imagined realistic survival story?	How could it be used in your own imagined fantasy survival story?
1. Who are the characters who must survive?			

1. Who are the characters who must survive?
2. What is the inhospitable setting?
3. How do they come to be there?
4. What time of year does the ordeal begin?
5. What dangers do they expect?
6. What do they do for shelter?
7. What do they do for food?
8. What unexpected help do they find?
9. What unexpected dangers befall them?
10. What conflict do they have?
11. What is one thing they learn about themselves/each other?
12. What is one way they grow as people?
13. What was the #1 thing that enabled them to survive?
14. How do they make their escape/get rescued?

Analysis Questions

1. What good eventually came of Jamie and Awasin's foolish decision to separate from the hunting party?
2. Though Jamie and Awasin survived, what was the cost of their ordeal?
3. What was the main way Jamie and Awasin's respective worldviews clashed?

Boys Without Names by Kashmiri Sheth

Thousands of real children have lives that look very similar to Gopal and his coworkers in *Boys Without Names*. Author Kashmiri Sheth carefully researched the reality of child labor and met real people in India who inspired her characters. Though Gopal and his story are fictional, they are a realistic representation of child labor that illegally thrives in India and many other countries. The fictional Gopal and his friends have a happy ending and find release from their slavery. Many real children do not escape; they have not had a happy ending to their real enslavement.

Boys Without Names is a story of contrasts and transitions. The boys in the frame factory move from becoming isolated, anonymous individuals to boys with names. They become real, people with identities and backstories, to each other and to us. They move from being isolated and sometimes opposed to each other to a dynamic of working together. They develop trust and have real relationships. Through Gopal's redemptive sacrifice of coming back for his friends, the story transitions from hopelessness to hope for the boys' future.

Sheth also gives us a fascinating look at the Indian culture in which she grew up. She uses many words that are foreign to us. She defines them with a translation immediately following the word or by creative context clues in the text that follows. This device not only teaches us about India and the way Indian people think, it also helps us to be "present" in the story. Indian folk tales form a significant thread through the story, illustrating for us what is alike and what is different from the folk tales we're familiar with. She also illustrates effectively how strongly Hindu religious beliefs and traditions influence everyday life in India. We finish the book understanding India better than we did before.

On the following chart, we have listed several contrasts explored in *Boys Without Names*. In the blank spaces, write an example in one sentence of how this contrast was part of the story. We filled in the first one for you to help you get started.

Country - Gopal feels secure in the quiet of the country.	City - Gopal feels bewildered in the bustle of the city.
Familiar	Unfamiliar

Safety	Fear
Kindness	Cruelty
Trust	Distrust
Freedom	Slavery
Hope	Despair
Determination	Resignation
Generosity	Greed
Cooperation	Self-service
Identity	Anonymity
Friends	Enemies
Loved Ones	Strangers
Courage	Cowardice
Found	Lost

Analysis Question

What is your personal response to *Boys Without Names*? Does it present new thoughts to you about your own life, the businesses you and your family support, and the responsibility that comes with freedom and plenty? Write one to two paragraphs about your personal response to *Boys Without Names*.

Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party

Ying Chang Compestine

To Read Before You Read *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*:

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another. —Mao Zedong

This provocative quote from Mao Zedong inspired the title of Ying Chang Compestine's semi-autobiographical novel *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*. Mao wrote these words in 1927, almost forty years before the start of China's Cultural Revolution which is the setting for this book. Mao Zedong had a long history with revolutions in China.

Here is a brief timeline of his life and China's turbulent history during his lifetime:

1893: Mao Zedong was born in the small village of Shaoshan in Hunan province.

1911: Revolution of 1911 erupted in China. The people of China were frustrated with the weak Manchu (also called Qing) dynasty that had allowed the United States and some European nations gradually to gain significant power in China.

1912: The last Qing emperor abdicated. The new government established in the revolution quickly crumbled, leaving China in disorder.

1918: Mao became involved in the May Fourth Movement. This movement sought China's independence, individual freedom, and rebirth in society and culture.

1921: Mao joined the new Chinese Communist Party as one of its first members.

1923: Mao joined the Nationalist Party, which worked alongside the Chinese Communist Party to bring China together under a strong nationalist government.

1926: Mao worked to involve China's rural population in the effort to unite China under one government.

1927: The Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party began working in opposition to each other. Mao, working with the Communists, tried to organize peasant uprisings. The Nationalist army easily crushed these uprisings.

1928: Mao fled with his followers to a mountain stronghold in southeast China. There he trained peasants in guerilla warfare and tried collective agriculture.

1929: Mao left his mountain stronghold. He joined other Chinese Communist Party leaders and established a Communist base in Jiangxi province.

1931-1934: The Nationalist Party tried to completely eradicate Communist power in China with repeated attacks.

1934: Communist leaders decided to seek a new base. Mao led 80,000 loyal Communists, called the Red Army, on the Long March, a journey of more than six thousand arduous miles to a new base in Yan'an in Shaanxi province.

1937: Japanese invaded China, beginning a war that would last until 1945. Chinese Communists and Nationalists switched to fighting Japan instead of fighting each other.

- 1943: Mao became the Chairman (top leader) of the Chinese Communist Party.
- 1945: Japanese were defeated in World War II and evacuated China. Soon, war erupted again between Chinese Nationalists and Communists.
- 1947: The Nationalist army had initial success, but the Chinese Communist Party forces soon prevailed in the war.
- 1949: Chairman Mao announced the formation of the People's Republic of China. Nationalist forces, led by Chiang Kai-shek, fled to the island of Taiwan and established a government there, claiming to be the true government of China. This government is active to this day, generally called Taiwan or the Republic of China. The People's Republic of China claims that Taiwan is their territory and must be overtaken.
- 1950-1953: Chinese troops under Mao supported North Korea in the Korean War.
- 1956: Chairman Mao encouraged the Chinese to openly express their opinions about the government. The next year, those who had responded by criticizing the Communist Party were arrested and sent to prison or labor camps.
- 1958: Chairman Mao launched the Great Leap Forward economic program. The aim was to increase industrial production by utilizing China's large labor force and to increase agricultural production through collective farming. The program was an utter failure, resulting in plummeting production and extensive famine.
- 1966: Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, usually referred to simply as the Cultural Revolution. "Proletariat" means laboring class. Mao recruited students and young adults to serve in his Red Army to carry out the revolution. Their mission was to destroy "counterrevolutionaries" and old traditions. The Cultural Revolution purposely pitted neighbor against neighbor, students against teachers, children against parents. The Cultural Revolution brought chaos to China as violence and terror filled the country.
- 1976: Mao Zedong died at the age of 82.
- Late 1970s-1980s: The People's Republic of China worked to decollectivize agriculture and open markets to trade with other nations.
- 1990s: Chinese leaders incorporated aspects of a free market system into China's economy.

While Chinese leaders spent the years following Mao's death rolling back many of his policies, the Chinese Communist Party continues to suppress its citizens. The government strictly controls the media (entertainment, news, publishing, Internet). Critics of China's government are routinely imprisoned without trial. The government also denies freedom of religion to its people.

The Little Red Book

In the Cultural Revolution, Mao sought to control China through violently forcing a new culture. He placed himself at the center of that culture. The "Little Red Book," officially titled *Quotations from Chairman Mao*, was one of the most widespread and successful propaganda campaigns in history. It contained 427 quotes from Mao's speeches and writings dating from 1926 onward. The quotations were divided by subject (such as "War and Peace," "Discipline," and "Correcting Mistaken Ideas") into thirty-three chapters.

The Chinese government established hundreds of new printing houses specifically to print this little five-inch-high book with a red cover. Total output was roughly a billion copies. By mid-1966, nearly the entire publishing industry in China was devoted to Mao's writings.

Chinese citizens were exhorted to “study Chairman Mao’s writings, follow his teachings and act according to his instructions.” Schools and workplaces required study of the “Little Red Book.” It became an unofficial requirement during the Cultural Revolution for people not only to own and read Quotations from Chairman Mao, but to carry it at all times.

Soon after Mao’s death in 1976, the Cultural Revolution drew to a close. His successors in government decided in 1979 that the “Little Red Book” had exerted a “widespread and pernicious influence” and ordered the books to be destroyed throughout China.

To Read After You Read *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*:

It would be a lost opportunity to finish *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party* unchanged, to leave its lessons unconsidered.

What did you think about *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*?

What is your reaction to the events of China’s Cultural Revolution?

What are your thoughts about Ling and her family’s response to what happens around them?

The Cultural Revolution in China is not the only time that a ruling party has attempted or will attempt to crush opposition, establish absolute power, and win over the hearts and minds of a group of people. Sadly, sinful human beings predictably act that way when they come into a position of power, whether it’s ruling a playground or a country.

Ling lived through the horror of watching her life crumble around her until it was unrecognizable. The evil of the Cultural Revolution reached every part of her life. She showed enormous courage and strength in the face of this horror. She refused to comply or join the popular tide of opinion. But she had weaknesses. When she was personally threatened by her schoolmates, she responded with violent thoughts, wishes, and threats toward those who threatened her. While we can all understand this reaction, what does this response often lead to? Violence begets violence, as the Cultural Revolution tragically demonstrates. If Ling had acted on her violent wishes, where might that have led? Would it help to move events in a positive direction?

In the historical background section at the end of the book, Ying Chang Compestine comments, “Today, China is still a Communist country, but perhaps in name only.” Economically, China has seen sweeping changes in recent decades. People in China have far more opportunities in making career choices and owning businesses. This has increased the standard of living. Many people enjoy a more comfortable, healthier lifestyle. However, the Chinese government still denies its citizens many freedoms. Chinese citizens are not free to criticize their government or to practice religion as they see fit. The government controls the number of children families may have and many other aspects of daily life. China has made economic progress, but the government still seeks to control through fear and repression.

Revolution is Not a Dinner Party is an important warning for people of any time or any place. Freedoms we take for granted are not guaranteed to us forever. Governments, policies, and cultures change. What should we take with us from *Revolution is Not a Dinner Party*? The book leads us to consider the answers to these questions:

How do ruthless dictators end up in power?

What happens when dissenters are silent?

What is lost when open debate and the freedom to disagree are squashed?

Why is a country and culture centered on one human being doomed to failure?

What happens when people feel justified in enacting violence?

Where does revenge lead?

What cannot be taken away from us without our permission?

Content Questions:

4. What is Ling's father's connection to America?
5. How is Ling's relationship with her mother different from her relationship with her father?
6. How did the government portray Chairman Mao to the people of China?
7. How did the Communist Party continue to benefit from Ling's father after they imprisoned him?
8. What were the Chinese people forced to mourn publicly beginning September 9, 1976?

Analysis Questions:

1. In two or three sentences, how would you analyze the Cultural Revolution in China from a Christian worldview?
2. Why do you think fear is a powerful motivator?
3. Why do you think Mao's regime crumbled so quickly after his death?

Ann Judson: A Missionary Life for Burma **Sharon James**

In *Ann Judson: A Missionary Life for Burma* you met Adoniram and Ann Judson, two of the most famous and influential missionaries in the history of the church. During their lifetime, and in all the years since, they have stood as heroes and examples for Christians who would follow the call of God for their lives. The Judsons' story is worth knowing for their importance in world history, church history, and geography. Sharon James' biography also helps us to think about the Judsons as human beings: weak, fallible, and finite, yet faithful to a faithful God. The extensive quotations in Ann's and Adoniram's own words give us a front row seat to their lives and thoughts.

Christians have been telling others the good news of salvation in Christ ever since Jesus commissioned His followers, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) Being a missionary has always been a part of being a Christian. The way American Christians and churches think of "missions" and "missionaries" now, in the twenty-first century, was greatly influenced by Adoniram and Ann Judson.

When the Judsons became some of the very first missionaries to leave the shores of the new United States in 1812, the large mission sending organizations and systems of support from individual churches did not exist. Adoniram Judson was a pioneer in this effort in addition to all his other pioneer efforts. Imagine leaving permanently for the other side of the world with your supporters still learning how to support you, financially and emotionally. On top of that, due to the Judsons study of the Bible en route, they could no longer in good conscience accept the support they had arranged from Congregationalist churches. Their conviction on the teaching of baptism led them to seek support all over again, from a different denomination with which

they had no previous connection, from the other side of the world! That was faith in the Lord's provision.

In our day, we enjoy comparatively safe, easy, and affordable travel options to almost every spot on the globe. It is impossible for us to understand the permanent choice Christians were making when they moved to lands across the ocean in the 1800s. Imagine a suitor of today asking his potential wife's father, "I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world . . ." (Adoniram Judson's 1810 letter to John Hasseltine). Also, try to imagine missionary life for yourself or a loved one before the Internet, before international phone lines, and before reliable airmail!

Serving as an overseas missionary usually means learning a new language. In our interconnected world, language learning is available many different ways. For most any language you can find apps, classes, books, audio, video, and maybe even a native tutor to chat with online. The Judsons had none of that. Adoniram Judson had to make his own language-learning tools with years of patient, disciplined labor. He and Ann kept up a daily grind of hours of study to reach their goal of communicating with the people of Burma.

The Judsons and their neighbors in Burma had essentially no head start from tourists, books, magazines, and documentaries for understanding each other. It was like a meeting of creatures from two different planets. To our twenty-first century sensibilities, the Judsons seem sometimes condescending, with an "us/them" attitude regarding their Burmese neighbors. Some of the terms they use, such as "natives" and "heathen," have fallen out of use because they can be offensive. With over two hundred years separating us, it's impossible for us to know how they intended those words and what true attitude of the heart they represented. It is possible that Adoniram and Ann Judson were somewhat condescending to the people of Burma in their way of speaking of them and their way of interacting with them. After all, they were human beings with blind spots. Everyone acts that way sometimes toward people we see as different (or, if we're honest, toward our closest relatives!). Whatever we can infer by reading their words centuries later, the book gives us a clearer and bigger picture of how the Judsons felt about the people of Burma: they left everything they knew, suffered beyond imagination, and gave their lives because they wanted them to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

When we look at the lives and presumed attitudes of people from the past or present, it is easy to find something to criticize. We're quick to focus on what we would do differently, where the holes are in someone's outlook, and what is wrong with the picture. That exercise puffs us up to feel better about ourselves. It also shields us from uncomfortable comparisons that might reveal something in ourselves we don't want to see. If we focus on the bad, we don't have room for the possible conviction from the good. If the Judsons did have a somewhat condescending attitude toward Burmese people, does that negate the positive impact of how God used them in His kingdom? Are we so perfect, from our "enlightened" post in the twenty-first century, that no one could find weak spots in our lives, now or two hundred years from now?

Sharon James' *Ann Judson: A Missionary Life for Burma* shows us up-close two people who signed up to suffer for their faith. When they had an easy out, they didn't take it. If you looked for a sweet, satisfying Hollywood "happy ending," you didn't find it. Set to the side dry historical facts, academic consideration of "influence on missions," letters in antiquated language, and maps of long sea journeys and look instead at these two people who have a white-hot question for you, now, today: Where will your journey with God take you?

Content Questions

1. In what U.S. state were Ann Hasseltine and Adoniram Judson born?
2. What denomination originally funded and sent out the Judsons and their associates?
3. Why did the Judsons seek support from the Baptist denomination after their journey to India?
4. In what two countries did Ann Judson spend time in 1822-1823 to recover from serious illness?
5. After war broke out between England and Burma, Adoniram was imprisoned on what charge?

Analysis Questions

1. What worldview led Ann Judson to go as a missionary to Burma?
2. Do you think the Judsons' mission in Burma was "successful"?
3. Write a one-paragraph review of Ann Judson: A Missionary Life for Burma.

The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories Sarah Orne Jewett

Character Sketch

The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories has strong, rounded characters. For our literary discussion on *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories* we will focus on character sketches. You will read one, then you will write one.

A character sketch can be several different things. It can:

- Introduce a fictional character
- Introduce a real person from history
- Introduce a person the writer knows personally
- Aid an author of fiction in planning the intricacies of a character in his or her work
- Aid an author of non-fiction in understanding a person he or she is writing about

Here's an example of a character sketch:

Perfect Self-Forgetfulness: Mrs. Blackett in *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*

Mrs. Blackett is a small, elderly woman of eighty-six years. She has bright eyes and an affectionate face. She communicates her feelings for people in her gentle, affirming voice, and with loving touches of her hand.

Mrs. Blackett's daughter is Mrs. Todd. Mrs. Todd decides one day that she and her friend, the book's narrator, will visit her mother at her isolated home on Green Island. We first meet Mrs. Blackett in the book when she comes to the shore, "a tiny figure with hankerchiefed head" to meet the boat. The narrator describes Mrs. Blackett as, "a delightful little person . . . with bright eyes and an affectionate air of expectation like a child on a holiday. You felt as if Mrs. Blackett

were an old and dear friend before you let go her cordial hand.” There was no advance warning for Mrs. Blackett that she would have guests for the day, but she was all welcome, delight, and hospitality. After they first visited in the parlor, Mrs. Blackett was ready to make dinner. She tells her guests, “Yes, do come right out into the old kitchen; I shan’t make any stranger of you.”

Mrs. Blackett shows deep contentment. She has lived in the same house on Green Island for a long time. Mrs. Todd is around the age of sixty, and we learn that she was born in the house where her mother and brother still live. It is simple and far from other human dwelling, but Mrs. Blackett speaks only with gratitude of her home and her life. She says that she never wishes for another home.

She takes excellent care of her home. The descriptions of the house and garden all indicate neat, clean, careful housekeeping. Mrs. Blackett is delighted and stands “proudly erect” when Mrs. Todd is full of surprise and praise that her mother recently turned and cleaned her carpets with only her son William’s help.

Mrs. Blackett loves her two children, Mrs. Todd and William, and affirms them in having chosen the life that suits them. She expresses gratitude that Mrs. Todd is able to live in the activity of the town. She describes herself as “the gainer” that William’s preference is to stay on the island with her. Through the visit, we see glimpses of how Mrs. Blackett and her son work in harmony together to maintain their life on their island home and farm. Mrs. Blackett devotes herself to helping William have a peaceful, happy home. In one touching conversation, Mrs. Blackett describes the Sunday night teas she and William enjoy, when she makes “something good for a surprise” and sets out the best dishes.

Mrs. Blackett’s purpose in life centers around loving people. Touched by her loving hospitality, the narrator says Mrs. Blackett has, “a perfect self-forgetfulness.” Later, when Mrs. Blackett attends a large family reunion, she speaks of her pleasure at the good weather that will allow the “old folks” to attend. She says, “I’m always glad not to have them disappointed.” She seems to forget that she is one of the oldest people there.

Mrs. Blackett’s mission and gifts are beautifully displayed in the scene where Mrs. Blackett invites her guest, the narrator, to see her rocking chair in her bedroom. The narrator takes in the cherished view from the window, Bible, reading glasses, thimble, and the neatly folded shirt Mrs. Blackett is making for her son. The narrator sees represented here, “Those dear old fingers and their loving stitches, that heart which had made the most of everything that needed love.” Her children, her old and new friends, and her extended family are drawn to Mrs. Blackett because of her self-forgetful love.

Write Your Own Character Sketch

Choose a character that you enjoyed from *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories* for a character sketch of at least one page. You can choose any character that is a main subject of at least one chapter. You might choose Mrs. Todd, William, Captain Littlepage, Joanna, or the narrator. While thinking about the information to include, you might find the following questions helpful:

- What is the character’s age and physical appearance?
- Where does the character live?
- What does the character do in his or her everyday life?
- What is the character’s background (family, childhood, education, career)?
- What is the first thing people notice about the character?
- What are one or two key traits in the character’s personality?
- What are the character’s priorities?
- What is the character’s ambition?

You will need to reference *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories* for details about the character. Take notes including page numbers on informative passages. You might not find the answers to all the above questions. You might find revealing facts about the character beyond the above questions. Direct quotations from the book may help reveal insights into the person. Organize the information into a logical order.

Note: There are no content or analysis questions for this book.

Tales from Silver Lands **by Charles Finger**

What's in a Folk Tale?

Tales from Silver Lands is a folk tale collection from Central and South America. The author, Charles J. Finger, indicates in the book that he collected these stories first-hand as he traveled through these lands. It was one of the first books for children containing South American folk tales collected from the people who told them.

What place do folk tales have in a life and in a culture? Do they have value beyond a few minutes of interesting diversion? What's in a folk tale?

A Story

Folk tales are stories created by regular folks. Stories are a central part of being human. We love stories! We love hearing about a crazy adventure our friend had on vacation. We love the story of that embarrassing thing our mom or dad did in their teens. We love hearing about the funny thing that happened yesterday at the grocery store. We love "Cinderella" and "The Three Bears" and all those fabulous people and talking animals we don't remember not knowing. In his teaching, Jesus used stories called parables to teach vital truth. Even the Bible is one big story made of many stories—not fairy tales, but true stories! We connect with stories, we learn from them naturally, and we remember them without effort.

Language Learning

Folk tales and all stories teach us about language, sentence structure, and the way language reflects what is real. Babies and toddlers do not learn language by having someone sit down and say, "These are ten nouns I want you to learn today," nor, "When I just told you, 'Sit down, Sam!' that was an imperative sentence and I meant that you have to sit down." Children learn language naturally by hearing people speak all around them and by slowly, gradually putting words together themselves. When a child hears stories, their exposure to language explodes! The average child won't hear words like "porridge," "brave," "woodsman," or "cottage" on a normal day—unless that child is hearing stories! That rich language learning through stories, written and spoken, carries on through all of life. Without even realizing it, we learn new words, new ways of putting them together, and new possibilities of thought when we hear or read stories.

Window into Culture

Folk tales reveal a wealth of information about the culture and worldview they come from. Is the story set in a dark forest or jungle? Does the poor maiden live in a thatched cottage or a grass hut? Does the story have a talking bear or monkey? An eagle or a parrot? What weather do the characters encounter? What are their clothes, food, and weapons? What does the story say about cultural priorities and expectations? All the small details of folk stories are like puzzle pieces to show us an informative picture of a people and a place.

Cues for Life

Folk stories have unifying themes that transcend cultures. The path of loyalty, bravery, honor, hard work, and faithfulness is the right path, no matter where you come from, or whether you're facing a witch, a dragon, or an ogre. Does the prince give up halfway through the forest of thorns between him and the princess, and just go back home and marry someone else? Do the evil ogres take over the kingdom while the would-be hero decides "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em?" Does Red Riding Hood leave Granny to fend for herself? No! In folk and fairy tales, good guys and good girls win. They may make mistakes (giving us a more interesting story), but they persevere and win in the end. These stories teach us how life works and what we should strive to do even better than direct lessons for good behavior. Do you think a child will remember to respect other people's property better from being told, "Respect other people's property," or to be told, "One morning three bears sat down to breakfast, but their porridge was too hot . . ." (Chances are, she'll want to hear the lesson that way a hundred times!)

Words for Thoughts, Fears, and Dreams

Folk tales loom larger than life: big castles, scary dragons, beautiful princesses, giant beanstalks. These big things help us make sense of the real-life, normal-sized things we meet every day. Folk tales give us words for our mixed-up feelings when we face a (figurative) dragon or dream of happily ever after. Looking through the wrong end of a telescope (as Dr. Seuss is reported to have said), or at a world of fantasy, helps us in our lifelong challenge to truly see and to understand the real world.

Respect for Those Who Told It

"I'm going to make a book of your stories." Imagine a person who feels small, normal, uninteresting, and insignificant hearing that something about them is worth writing down. Whatever it is a person has to offer, handed-down folk tales, memories, or wisdom, preserving it is a mark of honor. This exercise says, "Your culture matters. The people in your culture have valuable wisdom, experience, humor, and memories to contribute to the human conversation. The things that matter in your life matter. You matter."

Connection

Lastly, folk tales give us connection. There's something special that happens around the telling of a story. It makes a connection that doesn't happen in any other way. It becomes a shared experience, a shared language, a magnet drawing people around the same thoughts and feelings. *Boys Without Names* shows beautifully how sharing stories, our own stories and folk tales, can break down walls and build caring relationships. It even happens in a transient way in theaters and cinemas. Have you ever felt a sudden connection with a stranger as you laughed at the same joke or gasped at the same danger? Stories touch our hearts, and when we share stories, our hearts touch.

Content Questions

1. Choose one of the stories and write down the moral that you think it illustrates.
2. Write a one-paragraph synopsis of another one of the stories.
3. What are three differences you noticed in these stories versus stories of European origin?
4. The author gives the setting for where he heard the first story in the collection on pages 2-3. How would you describe the setting in one sentence?
5. Did any of the tales remind you of a folk tale you were already familiar with? Why?

Analysis Questions

1. What are three cultural/geographic clues about South and/or Central America you learned from the tales?
2. How do the tales portray the results of selflessness?
3. How would you communicate the good news of the gospel to the culture and worldview reflected in these stories?

Comparisons of Literature

Patricia St. John Tells Her Own Story and *A Long Walk to Water* are both set on the continent of Africa.

Lost in the Barrens and *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories* are both set on the continent of North America.

Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party and *Ann Judson: A Missionary Life for Burma* are both set (or largely set) on the continent of Asia.

A major part of *Blood Brothers*, *A Long Walk to Water*, and *The Day the World Stopped Turning* are descriptions of warfare.

Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party and *Boys Without Names* both involve people being forced to do things they don't really want to do.

A Long Walk to Water, *Boys Without Names*, and *Lost in the Barrens* all involve young men who show great strength of character.

Paul Little, Elias Chacour, Patricia St. John, and Ann Judson were all motivated by their Christian faith.

The literature you read gave you examples of different kinds of narration. Some authors told their own stories, some were narrators separate from the stories they were telling, and some narrators were characters in the stories.

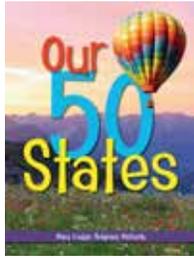
Books whose authors told their own stories: *Blood Brothers* and *Patricia St. John*

Books that had narrators separate from their stories: *Lost in the Barrens*, *Boys Without Names*, and *Ann Judson*

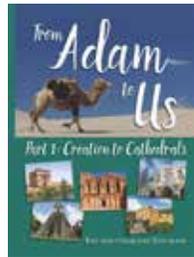
Books that had narrators who were characters in their stories: *The Day the World Turned Upside Down*, *Kidnapped*, *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party*, and *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories*.

Find Your Next Curriculum

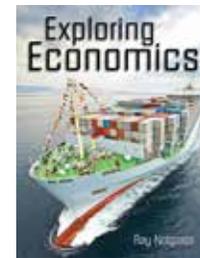
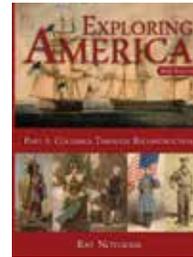
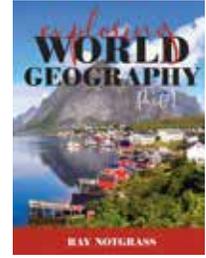
Elementary



Middle School



High School



[NOTGRASS.COM/SHOP](https://www.notgrass.com/shop)



Homeschool History

Suggested videos, virtual tours, games, and more to enhance your studies.

[NOTGRASS.COM/HH](https://www.notgrass.com/HH)

Support

Bonus downloads, an encouraging blog, and a community for moms.

[NOTGRASS.COM/SUPPORT](https://www.notgrass.com/support)

