

SUMMER READING STUDY QUESTIONS

Jacob Have I Loved

As you read the book, note the answers to the following questions. Your answers will help you take part in class discussions during the first days of school.

Jacob Have I Loved is a story about jealousy. The title comes from the Bible story of Jacob and Esau, Isaac's twin sons. Although Esau was the older son, Jacob was favored by his mother and when Isaac was dying, Jacob disguised himself as his brother and received the blessing meant for the eldest son. Both in the Old Testament story in the Book of Genesis and in the New Testament allusion to that story in Romans, the suggestion is that God, too, favored Jacob and ignored or even hated Esau.

Louise Bradshaw grew up on a small island in the Chesapeake Bay where the Protestant church was very important, as it is on Smith Island today. She knew this story and she could connect it to her own situation as the ordinary, ignored older twin. As a reader, you should keep the story in mind and look for ways that Katherine Paterson has woven it into the book.

"Rass Island"

In this chapter the adult Louise thinks back to the island where she spends her childhood and imagines returning there. As you read, try to visualize this island. What are the specific details she uses to create a sense of this place in the reader's mind?

Chapter 1

This chapter introduces three main characters: Louise, her twin sister Caroline, and McCall Purnell.

What are three or four important traits you discover about each of these characters?

Chapter 2

Louise introduces her parents and tells the story of her birth. Who was ignored? Who got all the attention? How did that continue through the Bradshaw twins' childhood? How is that like the story of Jacob and Esau?

Chapter 3

World War II begins for the U.S. with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. How does Louise feel about that? Does anyone care how she feels? How does Louise think her parents feel about her? How does she want them to show their love?

Chapter 4

Louise and Grandma are alone until her mother and Caroline return on the

ferry from the mainland where Caroline has been to the doctor. Notice who else gets off the ferry. He will be important. Louise's consuming jealousy is obvious in this chapter. Find a memory and an event which feed that jealousy.

Chapter 5

Hiram Wallace's story is told, and Annie Braxton is introduced. What is her distinguishing characteristic? What is his? Call and Louise think he is a German spy. Do you? Why or why not?

Chapter 6

Louise dreams that her sister is dead and makes plans to make money. Why?

Chapter 7

Louise and Call visit the Captain, and Call volunteers to make that regular. What is Louise jealous about in this chapter?

Chapter 8

Lyrics Unlimited turns out to be a scam. How does Louise figure that out? Auntie Braxton has collapsed and when Hiram Wallace sends Louise to get help, he calls her by her full name. Why was that important to her? (She asks this question in the book. What do you think?)

Chapter 9

They try to get rid of Auntie Braxton's cats. How does Caroline score again? At the end of the chapter Louise is reminded of the story of her birth again. Why?

Chapter 10

Hurricane. Who is brave and who is not?

Chapter 11

Louise pushes the Captain to go see what effect the storm had on his house. What did they find? Why do you think she responded so strongly to the hug in the boat?

Chapter 12

Louise cannot seem to control her own imagination and her grandmother makes her feel worse. The Captain finds another place to live. Why did Louise get so upset when her sister used her hand lotion? What did it stand for in her mind?

Chapter 13

The Captain solves his housing problem by marrying Trudy Braxton. Louise decides she's crazy and thinks this has advantages; what are they?

Chapter 14

Trudy Braxton dies. Grandma accuses the Captain of poisoning her and Louise of helping. Why do you think she says this kind of thing? Call goes to work for Louise's father and the Captain offers money for Caroline to go to boarding school in Baltimore. Where does this leave Louise? What does her Grandmother say that makes Louise feel even worse?

Chapter 15

Call goes into the Navy and Louise quits school to work on her father's boat. Why does she decide that God hates her? Do you think this is reasonable or crazy? Notice what Louise says happens to "ordinary, ungifted" female crabs. What is she saying about her own life? Why, then, do you think she is so happy, suddenly.

Chapter 16

The war is over. Call comes home but he is going to marry Caroline. How does Louise feel about this? Louise's grandmother is worse than ever. How does her mother cope with her?

Chapter 17

Louise is left alone with her grandmother again while her parents go to Caroline's wedding. What does she discover that makes her pity her grandmother? When Hiram Wallace comes for Christmas dinner, he asks Louise what she really wants to do. Why do you think she hasn't figured this out before?

Chapter 18

Louise's parents return. She has a long conversation with her mother about what brought her mother to Rass Island and why she is comfortable there. Her mother, too, tries to convince her to leave. What has kept Louise there?

Chapter 19

Louise goes to the University of Maryland. This is the late 1940s, a time when there aren't many places in medical schools for women, so she transfers to a nurse-midwife school. When she graduates she goes to a mountain village. Why does she pick Truitt and why does it remind her of the island?

Chapter 20

Louise is married. Her first son arrives just after her father dies; she doesn't go home for the funeral. At the end of the chapter, she delivers another pair of twins. How does this delivery differ from her own birth story? What does she do for the weaker twin? How does this show she has changed?

Many readers have been caught off-guard by the ending of this book.

Prepare for your discussion of the book by thinking about why you think this is, or isn't, an appropriate ending. If you like it, be prepared to defend it. If you don't, how would you have ended Louise's story?

These study questions are based on a guide from The Library of Congress.