Critical Reading Activities for the Works of Katherine Paterson

Lyddie

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illustrated by Margery Niblock
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## Lyddie

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*Answer Key*  

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**Reading Strategies Questions**

**Lyddie**

**Directions:** In *Lyddie*, Katherine Paterson makes use of **telling details**, or carefully placed details that give the reader information about the characters and their lives. Answer the following questions to help you think about how the right details paint a clear picture for the reader.

1. What details throughout the book show that Lyddie is proud?

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2. What details does the author use to show when and where this story takes place?

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3. Think about Lyddie and her roommates at Mrs. Bedlow’s—Amelia, Prudence, and Betsy. What details show us the differences among the four girls? What details show us the similarities among them?

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4. Look at the first few chapters of the book and compare them with the last few chapters. What details show how much Lyddie and her world have changed?

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Use the following cause-and-effect diagrams to think about how Lyddie’s life is affected by things she can’t control as well as by things she can control. For each cause, write down some effects that result from it. The first one is partially done for you. You can make additional boxes if you need them.

1. **CAUSE**
   Lyddie’s mother sends her to the tavern to earn money to pay off debts.

   **Effect**
   Lyddie learns how to survive on her own and how to be independent.

   **Effect**
   Lyddie meets Ezekiel Abernathy hiding in her family’s cabin.

2. **CAUSE**
   Lyddie meets a factory girl and learns about her life at the Lowell mills.

   **Effect**
   Lyddie meets a factory girl and learns about her life at the Lowell mills.

   **Effect**
   Lyddie meets Ezekiel Abernathy hiding in her family’s cabin.

3. **CAUSE**
   Lyddie rescues Brigid when Mr. Marsden attacks her.

   **Effect**
   Lyddie meets a factory girl and learns about her life at the Lowell mills.

   **Effect**
   Lyddie meets Ezekiel Abernathy hiding in her family’s cabin.
Check Your Comprehension

1. Lyddie’s mother thinks that the bear represents the devil and signifies the end.
2. Lyddie has always felt guilty for taking the money from Quaker Stevens in the first place, and she sees that it could really help Ezekiel. She also feels a kinship with Ezekiel, for she is enslaved, in a sense, as well.
3. Amelia and Prudence think Diana is a troublemaker. They call her a “radical.”
4. Lyddie reminds herself that she once stared down a bear. This reminds her how strong she is.
5. Luke hands Lyddie a parcel containing a note from Ezekiel (who is now free) and a check for fifty dollars to repay (with interest) the money she gave him at the cabin.
6. Lyddie is so happy to have the money for working the long hours that she can’t see signing a petition demanding shorter hours.
7. Lyddie hears Rachel cough and remembers what an unhealthy place the mill is, especially for a sickly child.
8. Lyddie feels that Luke is trying to bribe her with her own farm, and she refuses to be bought.
9. Diana is pregnant. She doesn’t want to shame herself or the Association.
10. After Lyddie attacks Mr. Marsden for assaulting Brigid, he charges her with moral turpitude. She is dishonorably discharged.

Reading Strategies Questions

1. Lyddie is pleased with how well she handles the bear; she doesn’t want to take charity from her neighbors; she won’t accept Luke Stevens’s proposal of marriage when she thinks he is trying to buy her. Many other details throughout the book show how proud Lyddie is. Encourage students to discuss whether or not Lyddie’s pride gets her into trouble and whether they would make the same choices she does.
2. Details about dress, transportation, living quarters, and occupations inform us that this story takes place in the mid-nineteenth century. Paterson also raises issues of that period to situate her story—such as slavery and abolition, phrenology, religion, and women’s education.
3. Amelia, Prudence, Betsy, and Lyddie discuss and debate such issues as religion and the labor movement; these debates reveal their similarities and differences. The way in which each girl finally leaves the mill also reveals her character. The girls are united in their exhaustion and hard work at the mill, but each is working toward a different end.
4. At the most basic level, Lyddie simply acts more maturely at the end of the book than she does at the beginning. She goes on her own, on the train, to Boston—where once she could barely fathom taking a stagecoach. She acts matter-of-factly and confidently when the situation demands it, which is an ability she has gained with age and experience. She is able to let other people take care of things, rather than feeling she has to do it all by herself. By the end of the book, Lyddie is more in control of her own destiny than she was at the beginning. She sees the world as being much more open to her—and full of possibility.
Graphic Organizer: Cause and Effect

Student answers will vary. Here are some possible answers:

1. Lyddie’s mother sends her to the tavern to earn money to pay off debts; Lyddie learns to be independent; Lyddie meets Ezekiel Abernathy hiding in her family’s cabin; Lyddie gets fired by Mrs. Cutler and goes to Lowell, Massachusetts.

2. Lyddie meets a factory girl and learns about her life; Lyddie goes to Lowell to work; Lyddie makes friends with Diana; Lyddie begins earning and saving money.

3. Lyddie rescues Brigid when Mr. Marsden attacks her; Mr. Marsden dismisses Brigid; Mr. Marsden has Lyddie dismissed for moral turpitude; Lyddie threatens Mr. Marsden to give Brigid her job back.

Discussion Questions

Students will have varying responses to these questions, which are designed to foster free-flowing discussion. These “answers” are only suggestions for guiding the discussion, expanding on students’ points, or jump-starting a flagging discussion.

1. Lyddie seems to feel that she, not her mother, is the responsible one in the family. She and Charles have essentially run the farm since their father left, and Lyddie is dismayed by what she sees as her mother’s foolish religious convictions. Students should be able to find numerous passages at the beginning of the book that show how Lyddie reacts to her mother and how much more practical Lyddie is.

2. The bear symbolizes whatever obstacle Lyddie is currently facing. When she needs to feel brave, she reminds herself that she once faced down a bear. When she feels that she is in a hopeless situation, then the obstacle in front of her becomes the bear.

3. Lyddie notices that her priorities change after she has been at the mill for a while. When she gets the check from Ezekiel Freeman (formerly Ezekiel Abernathy), she realizes that when she had little, she was more willing to give it away than she is now, when she has more to give. She enjoys working hard and earning money, but maybe she loses sight of the reason she wanted to earn money in the first place.

4. Amelia warns Lyddie that Diana is a labor organizer whose activities are frowned upon by the mill management. Amelia (and others like her) is afraid to associate with Diana and her fellow organizers. Diana is in charge of a petition that is circulating among the mill girls asking for legislation on the maximum number of hours workers can work each day and on the working conditions in the mills. Amelia and others are afraid of losing their jobs if they sign the petition.

5. The factories work the girls for long hours because the longer they work, the more money the factory owners make. The owners also give bonuses to the overseers whose girls have the highest production levels, so overseers push their girls hard. Since the owners want to keep their costs low, they do little to make the mills into decent workplaces. Girls like Lyddie need and enjoy the money they make at the mills, however, and so many are willing to take the bad pay and work the long hours—especially since there are few other jobs available for girls and women.

6. When Luke Stevens first proposes to Lyddie, she views his proposal as a bribe: If she marries him, she will be able to live on her farm again. Lyddie, who has worked so hard to be independent and without debt, is outraged by the idea that she can be bought by Luke Stevens. By the end of the book, Lyddie seems to soften toward Luke, and thinks that she may even fall in love with him one day. (Students may disagree about the degree to which Lyddie’s feelings change.)