

Approved for use in 6th grade

Summary of the Work:

In this novel, *Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Paterson (1977) tells a fascinating story of friendship. Paterson's novel is a heart-warming story of two children who use each other's strength to conquer and overcome many of their own weakness. Jess and Leslie become friends in spite of their differences. Through a series of misadventures in school, the friends face adversaries and conquer their fears. Leslie and Jess create an imaginary world in the woods beyond the creek. One day, Jess accepts an invitation to visit the art gallery and museum in Washington, D.C. with a favorite teacher. Therefore, he is not present when Leslie drowns in the creek by their fort in Terabithia. He is overwhelmed with grief and guilt. The bond between the children is symbolized by the bridge, or rope, into Terabithia. At the end of the story, Jess rebuilds a bridge for the queen who will come as a gesture of hope and rebirth.

Rationale:

Bridge to Terabithia is an excellent novel for students in Middle School because it deals with real life situations and problems that many children in the eleven to twelve age group find difficult to cope with. Paterson is praised by many critics for creating a realistic boy-girl friendship, something "so curiously unsung in literature" *Christian Science Monitor* (1978, p. B2.) One of the stronger subjects Paterson presents in *Bridge to Terabithia* is death. Yet Paterson presents death in a very sensitive manner that should not prove controversial to the readers. Another character briefly introduces the subject of child abuse and again Paterson presents this issue in a very knowledgeable and realistic format that the young adult reader would not find objectionable.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Bridge to Terabithia is a highly symbolic story that deals with fantasies, romance, and death. Pat Cunningham (1979, p. 217) In *The Reading Teacher* states that *Bridge to Terabithia* is: "truly magical. The special friendship between a preadolescent boy and girl is impossible to describe and memorable to experience". *The School Library Journal* (1977, p. 61) states that *Bridge to Terabithia* is: "Unusual because it portrays a believable relationship between a boy and a girl at an age when same-sex friendships are not the norm. It also represents an unemotional realistic and moving reaction to personal tragedy. Jess and Leslie are so effectively developed as characters many young readers might feel that they were their classmates."

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- *Bridge to Terabithia* won the prestigious John Newbery Medal in 1978. Other awards given Patterson for her work include School Library Journal's Best Book Award (1978), the D. Lett King College Award (1978), the Saint Mary of Woods College Award (1981), the University of Maryland and Washington and Lee University Award (1982), the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award (1978), the Janusz Korczak Medal (1981), the Colorado Blue Spruce Young Adult Book Award (1986), and the Le Grand Prix Des Jeunes Lectures Award (1986). Additionally, *Bridge to Terabithia* is recommended by *The Junior High School Paperback Collection* (1985), *Best Books for Children* (1989), *Junior High School Library Catalog* (1990), and the *New York Times Book Review* (1981).

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 880
- Readability Level: 7.9

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption: 2000

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Connection to the Curriculum:

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)