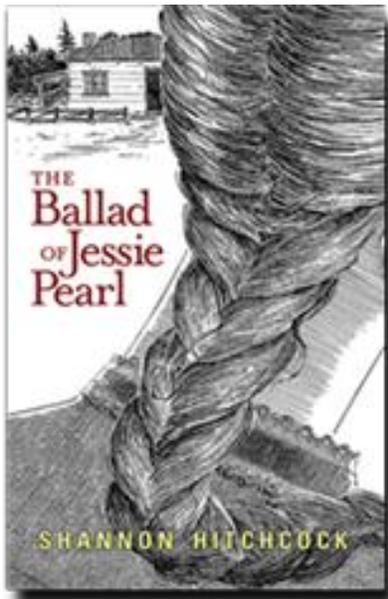


A CCSSI Annotated Discussion and Activity Guide for

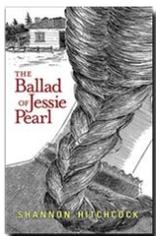
# *The Ballad of Jessie Pearl*

Written by Shannon Hitchcock



Published by namelos

Guide Created by Debbie Gonzales



## A Table of Contents

*The format of this guide follows a 4 section course of study. Each section is comprised of discussion questions for specifically designated chapter groupings.*

Common Core State Standards for Literacy Activity Guide Annotations.....	3
Reading Assignment Bookmarks.....	5
Discussion Questions for Chapters 1 through 9.....	6
The Ballad of Barbara Allen– A Reference Page.....	9
The Ballad – A Definition.....	10
The Ballad of Barbara Allen – A Discussion.....	11
Discussion Questions for Chapters 10 through 18.....	12
Discussion Questions for Chapters 19 through 27.....	14
Character Map .....	16
Discussion Questions for Chapters 28 through 36.....	24
The Ballad of Jessie Pearl – A Discussion.....	19
Tuberculosis and the Sanatorium.....	21
Acknowledgments.....	22

## Common Core State Standards for Literacy Activity Guide Annotations

<b>Key Ideas and Details</b>		Discussion Questions	The Ballad of Barbara Allen	Character Map	The Ballad of Jessie Pearl
<b>RL.6.1</b>	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓		✓	
<b>RL.6.2</b>	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>RL.6.3</b>	Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.	✓		✓	✓
<b>RL.7.1</b>	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓		✓	✓
<b>RL.7.3</b>	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).	✓		✓	✓
<b>RL.8.1</b>	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓		✓	✓
<b>RL.8.3</b>	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	✓		✓	
<b>RL.9-10.1</b>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓		✓	✓
<b>RL.9-10.3</b>	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.	✓		✓	
<b>RL.11-12.1</b>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.	✓		✓	✓
<b>RL.11-12.3</b>	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).	✓			✓

### **Craft and Structure**

<b>RL.6.4</b>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.	✓			
<b>RL.6.5</b>	Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.	✓			
<b>RL.7.4</b>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.	✓	✓		✓

		Discussion Questions	The Ballad of Barbara Allen	Character Map	The Ballad of Jessie Pearl
<b>RL.7.5</b>	Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.		✓		✓
<b>RL.7.6</b>	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.	✓		✓	
<b>RL.8.4</b>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.	✓			
<b>RL.8.5</b>	Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.		✓		
<b>RL.9-10.5</b>	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.	✓			
<b>RL.11-12.5</b>	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.	✓			✓

***Integration of Knowledge and Ideas***

<b>RL.6.7</b>	Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.		✓		
---------------	---	--	---	--	--

***Annotations***

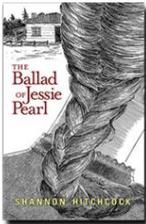
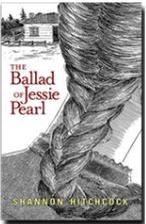
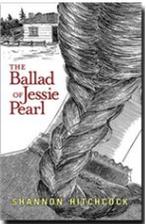
**RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.7.1, RL.7.3, RL.8.1, RL.8.3, RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3, RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.5, RL.7.4, RL.7.5, RL.7.6, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.9-10.5, RL.11-12.5, RL.6.7**

## Reading Assignment Bookmarks

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

Procedure:

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

		
Name: _____	Name: _____	Name: _____
<b>Chapters 1 through 9</b> _____  <b>Chapters 10 through 18</b> _____  <b>Chapters 19 through 27</b> _____  <b>Chapters 28 through 36</b> _____	<b>Chapters 1 through 9</b> _____  <b>Chapters 10 through 18</b> _____  <b>Chapters 19 through 27</b> _____  <b>Chapters 28 through 36</b> _____	<b>Chapters 1 through 9</b> _____  <b>Chapters 10 through 18</b> _____  <b>Chapters 19 through 27</b> _____  <b>Chapters 28 through 36</b> _____

## Discussion Questions for Chapters 1 through 9

*Sometimes when the kerosene lamp casts shadows, I think I see Ma's ghost, if she were still alive, she'd say, Jessie Pearl, you keep on studying. Not everybody is cut out to be a farm wife. We'll find a way to pay for teachers' college. Leave your pa to me (1).*

- From the information presented in these few opening lines what predictions can be made about the novel, **The Ballad of Jessie Pearl**?
- Who is the main character?
- What does the main character want?
- Can you anticipate what her trials may be? What she will have to overcome throughout the novel's journey?
- Who is "not cut out to be a farm wife"? Why not? Explain.
- From this brief passage, can you get a sense of time and place?
  - If so, when in history do you think the story takes place? What historical clue does the author give?
  - Where do you think the story takes place? How do you know?

*"How's breakfast comin' along?" Pa asks. He sets a gallon bucket of fresh milk on the counter.*

*"Just fine," I say, which is a big fat lie. Dough is sticking to my hands like glue. Finally I give up and throw the whole mess into a greased skillet. Instead of rolling it into biscuits, I'll bake it whole, like a cake (4).*

- Carrie has barely survived a traumatic delivery, leaving the household chores to Jessie. What are Pa's expectations for Jessie now that her sister must rest indefinitely?
- Why do you think Jessie lies about her meal preparation dilemma?
- Do you think, in a way, her fouled biscuits might serve as a metaphor for her father's expectations? For her preparedness for the life she will now have to lead?
- Is Jessie prepared to be a farm wife?
- Do you think she wants to be a farm wife?
- Are there times when a person has to set their dreams aside for a time for the betterment of others?
  - When?
  - Why?
  - Have you ever had to set your dreams aside for a time for the betterment of others? Explain.

*I already know this story because I borrowed it from Miss Wilson. When she reads the part about Beth dying, I brush away tears. I can imagine how Jo feels because I love my sisters something fierce (11).*

- Jessie has previously read the book that Miss Wilson is reading aloud to the classroom. What does this say about Jessie's intellectual capabilities?
- Miss Wilson loaned her copy of *Little Women* to Jessie. What does this act say about their relationship?

- Do you think this passage might serve as foreshadowing of things that might happen in the story? If so, what might that be?
- Do you love or have you loved someone “something fierce”?
  - How does that feel?
  - How does or did the thought of losing them feel?
  - Can someone survive the depth of sadness such a loss creates? How?

*Our house is all shut up like a coffin. Every bit of light and sound is snuffed out by closed doors. Pa’s in his room. Frank and Carrie in theirs. I need to talk to J. T. (16).*

- The phrase “shut up like a coffin” is a metaphor for what?
- Can you imagine what being shut in a coffin might feel like?
  - Could you breathe?
  - How would you manage to live?
  - Would you fight to get out or would you surrender to the inevitable – death?
- Do you think the words “light and sound” might serve as a metaphor, as well? If so, what?
- What does the fact that family members are isolating in various parts of the house communicate about the changes occurring within this family?
- Why does Jessie need to talk to J. T.?
- What does J. T. represent to Jessie?
- Who do you turn to when you feel shut up like a coffin?

*She dips her hands in the basin and scrubs them with lye soap. “I have to be extra careful not to infect Ky,” she says.*

*Carrie has said this every afternoon for nearly three months. Winter has turned into spring, and our days have settled into a monotonous routine (17).*

- Carrie will not be allowed to hold Ky. Why do you think she continues to scrub her hands with lye soap every day?
- Jessie has listened to Carrie say the exact same thing every single day for three months.
  - How do you think Jessie is able to keep her wits about her?
  - If you were in her place, would you be able to keep your wits about you?
- What does the word “monotonous” express about Jessie’s outlook on life?
- Reread the novel’s opening passage.
  - Do you think she’s cut out to be her sister’s nursemaid?
  - A farmwife?
  - Are her dreams of being a teacher a thing of the past?

*J. T. glares right back at Pa. "When Jessie's eighteen," he says. "That'll give me time to save some money so I can take care of her."*

*The two of them talk about me like I'm a horse about to be traded. I hold up my hands. "Wait a dad-burned minute! I'm planning to be a teacher before I settle down. Who said anything about marriage (31)?"*

- What does J. T.'s glare at Pa say about his intentions to marry Jessie? Why is he being emphatic about his plans?
- Are Pa and J. T. discussing Jessie as if she is a horse about to be traded"?
  - Do you think they care about her feelings?
  - About her desires?
  - Her dreams?
- What does Jessie's act of holding up her hands in protest say about her nature?
  - Is she a push-over?
  - Does she still have tenacious dreams for herself beyond caring for Carrie and being a farm wife?
- Even in times of duress and trouble, is it good to keep dreaming for a better day?
- Though being married to J. T. would be an honorable and desirable thing, why do you think Jessie clings to the hope of becoming a teacher?
- Do you think that Jessie's dream of becoming a teacher is worthy of delaying marriage to J. T.?
- What would you do? Why?

## The Ballad of Barbara Allen – A Reference Page



*While Maude rustles up supper, Carrie plays “The Ballad of Barbara Allen” on her dulcimer. “It seems those songs are always about broken hearts and dying,” I say. “I wish you’d play something happy (22).”*

Click [HERE](#) for a YouTube video of a dulcimer.

Click [HERE](#) to hear the Ballad of Barbara Allen performed by Joan Baez on YouTube.

### Lyrics for the Ballad of Barbara Allen

Was in the merry month of May  
When all gay flowers were a bloomin',  
Sweet William on his death-bed lay  
For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his servant to the town  
To the place where she was dwelling  
Said, "You must come to my master's house,  
If your name be Barbara Allen."

So slowly, slowly she gets up,  
And to his bedside going  
She drew the curtains to one side  
And says, "Young man, you're dying."

"I know, I'm sick and very low,  
And sorrow dwells within me  
No better, no better I never will be.  
Til I have Barbara Allen."

"Don't you remember last Saturday night  
When I was at the tavern,  
You gave your drinks to the ladies there  
But you slighted Barbara Allen?"

He reached up his pale white hands  
Intending for to touch her  
She turned away from his bedside  
And says, "Young man I won't have you."

He turned his cheek into the wall  
And bursted out a crying  
"What I do to thee I do to all  
And I do to Barbara Allen."

She had not walked and reached the town  
She heard the death bells ringing  
And as they rolled they seemed to say,  
"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

"Oh Mother, oh mother go make my bed  
Make it both long and narrow  
Sweet William died for me today  
I'll die for him tomorrow."

Sweet William was buried in the old church yard  
And Barbara there anigh him,  
And out of his grave grew a red, red rose,  
And out of hers, a briar.

## The Ballad – A Definition

A ballad is a narrative poem that often retells the story of a heroic deed, a legend or a recent event.

Ballads:

- have an orientation, complication and resolution
- often have an ending that is tragic or sad
- are traditionally shared orally (passed on by word of mouth), so they can change over time and sometimes have an anonymous author
- may contain verses or stanzas of four lines (known as quatrains)
- may contain repetition of stanzas (a chorus) or repeated lines where a certain word is changed
- can have a question and answer format – one stanza presents the question and the next one answers the question.

Ballads:

- include language that focuses on actions and dialogue
- include language that indirectly conveys information about the characters, relationships, events, time period and setting (i.e. so the audience has to infer meanings)
- are often written in third or first person
- usually have a rhyming pattern of either abac, aabb or abcb
- have a regular beat (metrical) structure
- are often written in complete sentences
- include language that is selected to convey a particular mood or evoke an emotional response.

## The Ballad of Barbara Allen – A Discussion

*Listen closely to the YouTube video rendition of the Ballad of Barbara Allen linked on page 10. Study the ballad's lyrics printed on the page, as well. Refer to both while discussing the following questions.*

1. Is The Ballad of Barbara Allen a narrative poem?
2. Does the ballad retell a story of a heroic deed, a legend or a recent event? Which is it?
3. Does the story have a have an orientation, complication and resolution?
  - a. Where does the story take place?
  - b. What is the problem or complication?
  - c. What is the final resolution?
4. Is the ending tragic or sad? How so?
5. Compare the lyrics sung by Joan Baez and words printed on the page.
  - a. Are they different in any way?
  - b. Do you think they may have changed over time?
  - c. Do you think that there may be some varying artist interpretation?
6. Does the ballad contain verses or stanzas of four lines?
7. Note the repetition of stanzas (a chorus) or repeated lines where a certain word is changed. Can you point them out?
8. Does the ballad have a question and answer format? How so?
9. Does the ballad include language that focuses on actions and dialogue?
10. Does the ballad contain language that indirectly conveys information about:
  - a. The characters?
  - b. Their relationships?
  - c. Events?
  - d. Time period?
  - e. The setting?
11. Is it written in third or first person?
12. What rhyming pattern does it have - abac, aabb or abcb?
13. Does it have a regular beat (metrical) structure?
14. Is it written in complete sentences?
15. What is your emotional response to the Ballad of Barbara Allen?

## Discussion Questions for Chapters 10 through 18

*I move over to place the tea on Carrie's bedside table. Her Bible lies open, with Matthew 6:27 circled. And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life (38)?*

- Why do you think Carrie has circled this verse in her Bible?
- Has Carrie surrendered to her illness?
- How about Jessie? How is she feeling about Carrie's illness?
- What do you think about the Bible verse message? What does it say to you?
- What do you think will become of Carrie? Of Jessie? Ky?
- What about Jessie's dream to become a teacher? Is it important now?

*My hands shake as I comb and fluff her hair. "She's lost more than thirty pounds. It's a miracle that the dress fits."*

*"Ain't no miracle involved," Maude says. "When all of you was workin' in tobacco, Carrie had me take up her dress (40)."*

- Maude's character has made many transformations through the story. Do you think the changes occurred within Maude or are they due to Jessie's perception of her?
- In other words, due to the troublesome circumstances, do you think Maude's nature changed or Jessie's?
- Have you ever misjudged a person's character?
  - Thought that they were unlikeable, only to discover that you were wrong?
  - Describe this experience.
  - What did you learn about the person?
  - What did you learn about yourself?

*...I'm asking you to be his mother, Jessie, at least until Frank remarries. I want you and Anna to always be close to my boy. Please look after him because I can't (43).*

- Torn between love for her deceased sister and her devotion to Ky and her family, does Jessie have any choice in this matter? Is she duty-bound, at this point?
- Review the novel's opening passage.
  - Must Jessie now become a farm wife?
  - Sacrifice her life in service to her family and the farm?
- Are there things in your life that you do in service of others rather than focus on yourself?
- Is it good to think of the needs of others rather than insist upon your own being met?

*I tilt my head back and look into his eyes. "I feel sick inside. Like I won't ever be happy again."*

*"You'll be happy again," J. T. says. "I'll see to that. (48)."*

- Will Jessie ever be as happy as she once was?
- Will she ever be able to live for her own dreams?
- For Jessie will a sense of obligation forever trump her desires?
- Do you think that J. T. will be able to assure that Jessie will be happy once again?
- From where does true happiness begin?
- Is it J. T.'s job to make Jessie happy? Or should she take responsibility for that herself?

*"Joseph," Liza says, "would you like some lemon pound cake? I made it especially for you."*

*He smiles at her. "That's mighty nice of you, Liza. Could you put two pieces on a plate? One for me and one for Jessie (56)?"*

- What does Liza's offer imply?
- What is Liza's true intention?
- What does J. T.'s response imply?
- What is his true intention?

*Tears gather and threaten to spill over. "I'm afraid. Afraid every day for the rest of my life will be just like this one: scrubbing, cooking, cleaning. That I'll never see the ocean or the mountains. Nothing special will ever happen to me (67)."*

- Do you think, perhaps, being "cut out" to be a farm wife has more to do with a state-of-mind rather than the tasks involved? How so?
- Does being a farm wife have something to do with having a strong spirit?
- Though Jessie's going through the motions of meeting her obligation, is she content in the direction her life is taking?
- Do you think that she will be able to live in this way indefinitely?
- What do you think she should do?
- What would you do if you were Jessie?

## Discussion Questions for Chapters 19 through 27

*The tension inside me builds when Ky wakes up, screaming like a panther. "I have to feed the baby," I say. "Don't argue with me. Crank the car and leave. Now (70)."*

- Jessie's intuition tells her that Anna is ill. She saw Carrie through a traumatic sickness and death, and because of this, fears the worse for her sister. Do you think this contributes to the "tension" she feels inside?
- Jessie's nature is changing. What character change is she demonstrating as she demands that Cole bring Doc Benbow to Anna?
  - Is she becoming assertive or demanding?
  - Is she becoming confident or belligerent?
- How has stepping up to the challenge of caring for Ky and her home changed Jessie for the better?

*Anna laughs at me. "Carrie told you a long time ago to quit imitating Maude. Your face is going to freeze in a Maude-like pucker (72)."*

- Can you think of ways that Jessie and Maude are beginning to share similar character traits?
  - With regard to responding to the call of duty?
  - With regard to becoming assertive? Decisive? Dependable?
- Can you think of ways that Jessie and Maude are still very different?
  - Domestic skills?
  - Ways of demonstrating compassion?
- As the story progresses, can you see how Jessie's nature is becoming much like Maude's? Can this be a beneficial thing?

*I stomp my foot in the dirt. "Let me tell you how it really is. You're going because you don't want to be a sharecropper like your pa. I didn't enter into your decision. And don't pretend like I did (76)."*

*J. T.'s hands ball into fists. "Why do you have to make me feel so guilty? If you had a chance to leave for teachers' college, you'd take it."*

*Ky whimpers and I jostle him on my hip. "Would I? I just don't know anymore. The feelings I have for you tie my heart in knots (77)."*

- Could it be that, like Jessie, J. T. isn't cut out for farm life either?
- Could it be that he wants more for his life than being a sharecropper can offer?
- Could it be that he and Jessie share the dream of wanting more for their lives, or at least experiencing things other than the monotony of life on the farm?
- Why is Jessie second-guessing her desire to follow her dream?
- Do you think that her feelings for J. T. are the only things that are confusing her?
- What about that baby she's jostling on her hip? Does Ky play a role in her emotional confusion?

*I hug the books to my chest, feeling their connection to Ma. She quit school after Pa asked her to marry. I push them toward Sophie. "Would you write my name in there?"*

*She nods. "Let me get the inkwell and a pen." When she passes the school books back to me, I open the top one. To Jessie Pearl Hemmings, her inscription reads. Learning is meant to be shared. Pass it on (87).*

- Has Jessie's connection to her deceased mother always been strong?
- Since the first passage of this book, has her mother's desire for Jessie to live her life to the fullest been prevalent?
- And, now that Jessie has these books in her grasp, do you think her mother's memory will have an even stronger influence over Jessie, even in death?
- Consider the phrase "Learning is meant to be shared. Pass it on."
  - Do you think "learning" is limited to the occurrences that happen within the walls of the classroom?
  - Think about Maude's influence on Jessie. What kind of shared learning has occurred within the bond of that relationship?
- Do you think that embracing these books might serve as a pivotal point in Jessie's character development? How so?

*I take a seat beside him on the settee. "I've been thinking. Now that you've got some free time, you could teach me to drive."*

*... I keep staring at him. I don't plan to back down (92).*

- Do you think that Jessie's desire to learn to drive could be a metaphor for becoming independent? How so?
- Could it be a metaphor for freedom? How so?
- What does Jessie's staring at Frank say about her intention?
- What does it say about her change in character?

*Liza looks pale, her skin as white as milk. "Wake up," I beg. "Don't you dare die in my bed. I'm sure you'd haunt me for all eternity." I touch her clammy hand and rub it between my own, trying to warm it up (98).*

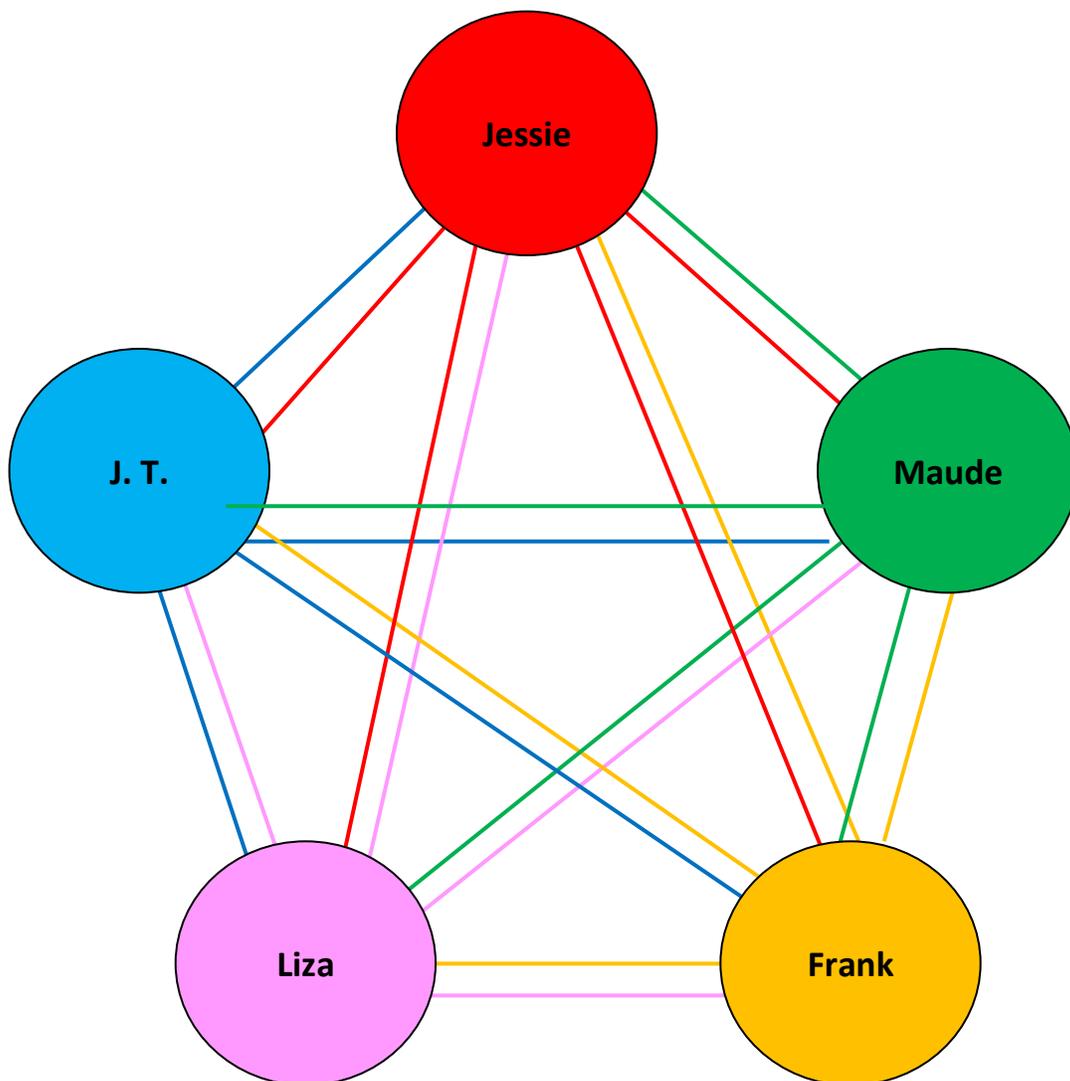
- How have the tables turned, in this scene?
- What does Jessie's willingness to care for Liza represent? Forgiveness? Redemption? Kindness? Friendship?
- What does that act of warming Liza's hand with her own say about Jessie's changed nature?
- In what way does this act reveal wisdom Jessie has gleaned from Maude?

## Character Map

The characters in **The Ballad of Jessie Pearl** are emotionally connected through various situations and desires. Consider the character connectivity illustrated in the following color-coded web-linked diagram. Discuss how each character has affected the other through thought, word, and deed by following the color-coded web line between each character. (Note that some characters have a stronger sense of connectivity than others.)

For example, starting at the red circle representing Jessie, trace the red line to Maude's green circle. Discuss Jessie's emotional connectivity with Maude. Ask yourself questions similar to the following: How did Jessie feel about Maude in the early chapters of the book? Did their relationship evolve in any way? How so? What events caused the change? Conversely, discuss Maude's emotional connectivity with Jessie. What are your observations?

Then discuss how each character has emotionally affected you. Who do you relate to? Who irritates you? Who are you cheering for? Why?



## Discussion Questions for Chapters 28 through 36

*I stare at Liza. She's wearing a wool serge dress with white collar and cuffs. The rich brown color shows off her blonde hair and makes her eyes look as dark as chocolate. "I'd like to help," she tells Maude. "Do you have a job for me?"*

*Maude hands her a bowl of melted butter and a brush. "You can baste the turkey's butt," she says (102).*

- This passage depicts an aspect of the novel's subplot.
  - What is Liza's intention in the scene?
  - Is her desire to help in the meal preparation genuine or does she have an ulterior motive?
  - What is Jessie's role in this scene?
  - Is her presence passive or active?
  - What about Maude?
  - Do you think the turkey's back side really needed extra basting?
- Access Maude and Jessie's relationship to this point. Are they becoming a team, of sorts? How so?

*Frank leans forward and brushes his lips across mine. "Do you think we could learn to love each other, Jessie? Get married and raise Ky together? Maybe give him brothers and sisters someday (108)?"*

- Do you find Frank's actions to be surprising? Understandable?
- Can you think of reasons why Jessie and Frank might be a good couple?
- Can you think of reasons why they would not?
- Who is better suited for Jessie? J. T. or Frank? Explain your answer.
- Who would inspire Jessie to reach for her dreams?
- Who would hold her back?

*Sobbing, I pull out the secret envelope. "See this letter? It's my acceptance to a school for teachers. Part of me wants to go away, and the other part can't stand the thought. How can I leave all of the people I love the most? Help me, Carrie. Help me decide (118)."*

- Once again, return to Ma's words in the novel's opening lines. Consider the emotional journey Jessie has traveled throughout the story.
- In the end, is she cut out to be a farm wife? Certainly, she's proven that she can perform all the tasks required with skill and has met every challenge that has come her way. But, do you think she'd be happy serving in the role for the rest of her life?
- What of her obligations to her father? To her family? To J. T.? Can she turn her back on them now and leave?

- Do you think that Jessie is facing a defining moment, of sorts? One which will color the course of her future?

*Lost in thought, I barely notice when J. T. sits down beside me. He reaches up and touches my hair. "Talk to me, Jessie."*

*With trembling hands, I reach into my pocket and hand him the letter. "I applied when you were in Winston," I say (124).*

- Consider the effect that letters have had on Jessie and J. T.'s relationship – ways that they've brought them closer together.
  - Letters that Jessie wrote to J. T. while he was away.
  - The letters that Liza kept and then later returned.
  - And now, this letter of acceptance to the teachers' college.
- Why do you think her hands are trembling?
  - Because of concern for J. T.'s reaction?
  - Because of the decision she must make?
- If you were Jessie at this moment, with your family happy and whole around you and a wonderful man by your side, what would you do?
  - If she stays, her life would be predictable and pleasant.
    - Is this a good thing? Explain.
    - Is this a bad thing? Explain.
  - If she goes, while adventurous, her life will take an uncharted and uncertain path.
    - Is this a good thing? Explain.
    - Is this a bad thing? Explain.

## The Ballad of Jessie Pearl – A Discussion

*Jessie Pearl is a beautiful girl  
She's a beautiful girl, that Jessie Pearl  
Jessie Pearl, oh, Jessie Pearl  
She's a beautiful girl, that Jessie Pearl*

*She lost her ma and her sister's ill  
A graveyard waits upon a hill  
She lost her ma and her sister's ill  
That Jessie Pearl is a grieving girl*

*Jessie has a choice to make  
Wondering 'bout which road to take  
Jessie has a choice to make  
Will Jessie Pearl be a lonely girl?*

*Jessie's life is changin' fast  
She's in love, but will it last?  
Jessie's life is changin' fast  
Should Jessie Pearl be a traveling girl? (123-4, 127)*

Refer to the lyrics of the *Ballad of Jessie Pearl* printed above while discussing the following questions.

1. Is *The Ballad of Jessie Pearl* a narrative poem?
2. Does the ballad retell a story of a heroic deed, a legend or a recent event? Which is it?
3. Does the story have a have an orientation, complication and resolution?
  - a. Where does the story take place?
  - b. What is the problem or complication?
  - c. What is the final resolution?
4. Is the ending tragic or sad? How so?
5. Does the ballad contain verses or stanzas of four lines?
6. Note the repetition of stanzas (a chorus) or repeated lines where a certain word is changed. Can you point them out?

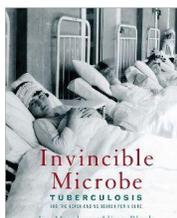
7. Does the ballad have a question and answer format? How so?
8. Does the ballad include language that focuses on actions and dialogue?
9. Does the ballad contain language that indirectly conveys information about:
  - a. The characters?
  - b. Their relationships?
  - c. Events?
  - d. Time period?
  - e. The setting?
10. Is it written in third or first person?
11. What rhyming pattern does it have - abac, aabb or abcb?
12. Does it have a regular beat (metrical) structure?
13. Is it written in complete sentences?
14. What is your emotional response to *The Ballad of Jessie Pearl*?
15. If you were to add one more stanza to the ballad, what would you say?
16. What do you predict for Jessie's future?
  - a. Will she become a teacher?
  - b. Will she marry J. T.?
  - c. Will she return to become a farm wife?
  - d. Will she always love her family?
  - e. Will she find the balance of finding happiness and love?

## Tuberculosis and the Sanatorium

*Anna reaches out and rubs my bowed head. "Jessie, I'm going away.  
Doc says my best chance at recovery is in a sanatorium (72)."*

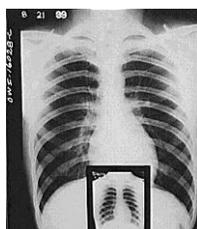
Tuberculosis is a life-threatening, highly contagious disease of the lungs marked by high fever and retched coughing up of mucus and sputum. [The North Carolina Museum of History](#) states, "For hundreds of years TB killed more people worldwide than any other single disease. In fact, it wiped out one-seventh of the human race at any given time."

To learn more about this insidious disease and its cure, consider the references listed below.



[Invincible Microbe: Tuberculosis and the Never-Ending Search for a Cure](#) by Jim Murphy and Alison Blank (Clarion 2012).

[The School Library Journal](#) states, "Starting with the dramatic cover photo of a row of girls lying in their hospital beds, Murphy and Blank unwind the tangled history of tuberculosis, a disease that continues to kill millions every year... Readers will be surprised to learn that kings believed that a single touch of their hand would cure the peasants and that one of the more radical treatments for TB included removing multiple ribs from a patient's chest. At times gruesome and somewhat somnolent when describing the peaceful sanatoriums, the book clearly details all the many unsuccessful attempts to cure this infectious disease."



**"However much the sanatorium resembled other institutions, it had one unique feature – the omnipresence of the shadow of death."**

~ From *The Great White Plaque: The Culture of Death and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium*, by Richard Sucre - <http://www.faculty.virginia.edu/blueridgesanatorium/death.htm>

**"The mountain climate of western North Carolina was considered ideal for TB patients."**

~ From *Health and Healing in North Carolina: an interactive timeline produced by Blue Cross-Blue Shield of North Carolina and the North Carolina Museum of History* - <http://www.nchealthandhealing.com>

**"[A] diary...was kept by Fanny W. Midgett when she was being treated for tuberculosis in this sanatorium...She was admitted to Cragmont Sanatorium in 1921. She kept a diary from Jan. 1, 1921 to June 13, 1921."**

~ From *The Diary of Frannie Midgett* submitted by Key Midgett Shepard and Marla Beasley in 2008 - <http://www.ncgenweb.us/dare/miscellany/midgettfanniediary.html>

# Acknowledgements

*Author*

*Shannon Hitchcock*

[www.shannonhitchcock.com](http://www.shannonhitchcock.com)

*Guide Creator*

*Debbie Gonzales*

[www.debbiegonzales.com](http://www.debbiegonzales.com)

[www.readerkidz.com](http://www.readerkidz.com)

## Sources:

"Barbara Allen - Joan Baez (cover) - YouTube." *YouTube*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Nov. 2012.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QN7rXJhFEV0&feature=related>.

"electronicTeachingcollection – English EY4\_poetry\_SLR\_ballad." Queensland Government Department of Education and Training.

"Emmylou Harris - Barbara Allen Lyrics." *Lyrics, Song Lyrics LyricsMode.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Nov. 2012.  
<http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/e/emmy>

Janeczko, Paul B., and Christopher Raschka. *A kick in the head*. New York: Scholastic, 2006/2005. Print.

"My Grandfather's Clock - YouTube." *YouTube*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Nov. 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxmVcmapQLQ&feature=fvwrel>

Hitchcock, Shannon. *The Ballad of Jessie Pearl*. South Hampton: namelos, 2012.  
[www.debbiegonzales.com](http://www.debbiegonzales.com)