

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Heartbeat* by Sharon Creech.

1. Describe the way that Max and Annie like to run.
2. What is the outcome of Max's first race with the track team?
3. What secret about running does Grandpa tell first to Max and then to baby Joey?
4. The girls' track team coach frequently asks Annie if she is interested in trying out for the track team. How does Annie respond to the coach's question, and what is she really thinking?
5. Describe the dreams Annie has about her mother's unborn baby on pages 20 and 119. What do her dreams show about Annie's feelings toward the new baby?
6. Describe Annie's relationship with her Grandpa. What does Annie have in common with her Grandpa? What role does he play in her life?
7. Annie asks Max, "Why are we here on this earth? . . . Am I supposed to do something *important*? It doesn't seem enough to merely take up space on this planet. . ." (28) How would you answer Annie's questions?
8. On p. 115, why does Annie slug Max? Afterwards, she feels like apologizing, but doesn't provide a full explanation of why she did it. Can you explain why Annie hit her friend?
9. In the chapter called "Sleeping," Annie glimpses Grandpa holding baby Joey, and she feels both "infinitely happy" and "infinitely infinitely infinitely sad" (162). Explain why she feels the way she does in that moment.
10. As you look back through the novel, what references can you find to *heartbeat*? What might the title *Heartbeat* signify?
11. At the very end of the book, Annie's final drawing of her apple is a "small shiny brown seed" (180). Why do you think she chose to draw her apple this way, and what does this seed symbolize?
12. Throughout the story, we get details about Max's life. Putting the pieces together, what is Max's story?
13. With the birth of her new brother Joey and the fading of her Grandpa's memory, how do you think Annie's life will change in the near future?

14. After her confrontation with Max, Annie says, “I do not like to be wrong which is probably a serious character flaw” (115). Do you think this is true? Explain.

15. In the chapter called “The Coach,” Annie explains her reasons for not wanting to participate in competitive sports (70 & 71). Do you agree with her criticism of competitive sports? What might be some of the benefits of competitive sports?

Note: These literature circle questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1–3; Comprehension: 4–6; Application: 7–8; Analysis: 9–11; Synthesis: 12–13; Evaluation: 14–15.

Activities

1. With another student, choose one of the chapters in *Heartbeat* and create a reader’s theater to present to your class. Assign lines, and practice your dramatic reading aloud. Be ready to explain why you chose to present the chapter you did.

2. For a class assignment, Annie writes poems about things she fears and things she loves (32–34). Compile your own lists of things you fear and things you love, and write them in a free verse style poem like Annie’s.

3. Annie runs for the pure pleasure of running. Do you have a sport, interest, or hobby that you enjoy simply for its own sake? What makes it appealing to you? Using descriptive language, write an essay about your special interest, explaining why you enjoy it. Or write a free verse style poem as Annie does to express your love for your hobby.