Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* by Katherine Hannigan.

1. Why does Ida B go to “talk” with the old tree when the young trees in her family’s apple orchard tell her that hard times are headed her way?

2. Ida B eats the same meal everyday for breakfast—hot rolled oats with raisins and milk, no sugar—and for lunch—peanut butter on one slice of bread, milk, and an apple. What are her reasons for never varying her choices?

3. Why does Ida B feel so upset that Ms. Myers, her kindergarten teacher at the Ernest B. Lawson Elementary School, wants her to go by the name Ida instead of Ida B?

4. Mama’s sickness brought about a lot of changes in Ida B’s life. What were some of the changes, and how did she feel about them?

5. Ms. Washington tries many subtle tactics to bring Ida B out of her shell. What exactly does she do? What are some of Ms. Washington’s qualities that appeal to Ida B?

6. Ida B devises a game to play with Ronnie to help him learn his math facts. They play the game for money. Ronnie loses money during the math game, but wins it back during running races against Ida B. Ida B found a way to make Ronnie feel proud of his strengths while at the same time improving his areas of weakness. Have you ever helped a friend overcome a weakness? What did you do? How did it work out?

7. Ida B felt so good after reading aloud to the class. She described the feeling as a “…warm glow that was in my belly and arms and my legs and my head and wouldn’t go away” (p. 152). Have you ever done something that gave you a feeling like that? What was it? How would you describe the way it made you feel?

8. Daddy tells Ida B that, “We don’t own the earth. We are the earth’s caretakers.” Ida B answers his comment by saying, “I think the earth takes care of us, too” (pp. 29-32). What does she mean?

9. Ida B has all sorts of good feelings after Ms. Washington has her read out loud to her class, but she holds back on sharing those good feelings with her parents. What does she think might happen if she tells them? Does she feel better or worse after sharing some, but not all, of the wonderfulness of reading out loud?
10. At the end of the story, Ida B says, “And I just sat on the porch looking at all of that land and the mountain and the trees and the stars that weren’t mine at all, and never would be. But in some ways they’d always belong to me, and I couldn’t imagine not belonging to them” (p. 245). What does she mean when she says this?

11. Ida B says, “…good plans are the best way to maximize fun, avoid disaster, and, possibly, save the world” (p. 38). Ida B makes a lot of plans throughout the book. What are some of the plans she makes? Do they achieve these ends? Why or why not?

12. What do you imagine will happen to Ida B after the last chapter? Will she continue at Ernest B. Lawson Elementary? Will she make friends? What will her relationship with Mama and Daddy be like?

13. Claire tells Ida B that she is mean. Do you think Ida B does mean things? Is she a mean person? What does she do to make things right with Claire? With the old tree? Have you ever done something mean, then tried to make it right? How did it work out?

14. What do Evan and Ida Applewood, Ida B’s parents, do right in raising Ida B? Do they make mistakes in raising her? Was it a good idea to home school her? Was it a good decision to send her back to school? If you were Evan or Ida, what would you do differently in raising Ida B? What would you do the same?

Note: The following questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-5; Application: 6-7; Analysis: 8-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-14.

Activities:

1. Ida B loves to be a part of nature, and is most comfortable outside. She is amazed by the world around her and is constantly discovering new things. Take time as a class to go on nature walks in your neighborhood. Look closely at the world around you, take notes, make sketches, and see what you find.

2. Ms. Washington helps Ida B in many ways. She is a supportive teacher and friend. Think about which teachers have had an impact on your life. How have they helped you to grow? Collect stories as a class and share them with each other and the teachers that have touched you.

3. Ida B loved nature and was deeply saddened when part of her family’s orchard was cut down. She believes that one should take care of the earth, as her father says. How could your class take care of the earth, individually or through a class project?