

## Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The River Between Us* by Richard Peck.

1. What state do Tilly and her family live in? What state lies on the other side of the Mississippi River? Briefly explain how the town of Grand Tower got its name.
2. What does Noah do in town that makes Mama afraid he will leave home?
3. List three items Delphine and Tilly bring to Camp Defiance from Grand Tower. Explain how they use each item to help the soldiers.
4. What book does Tilly see beside Noah's cot at Camp Defiance? Why does Tilly's heart sink after seeing this book?
5. In his letter to Tilly, Curry explains that "Egypt is no place for them of my convictions." What does Curry mean by this? How do Curry's convictions differ from Noah's convictions?
6. Describe the friendship between Calinda and Cass. What do the two characters have in common? How does Cass change after Calinda's arrival?
7. Imagine you were compelled to leave home like Delphine and Calinda and could not bring everything you owned. List 3 to 5 items you would take with you and explain why you would bring each item.
8. Mama says Noah left home "like a thief in the night." What do you think she meant by this? Imagine you are Noah and you want to leave a note explaining your reasons for joining the army. What would you say to help your family understand your decision?
9. Reread the description on page 120 of the officers' quarters at Mrs. Hanrahan's house. Compare the officers' living conditions to the living conditions of the soldiers at Camp Defiance. What reason might there be for these differences? Do you think this is fair or unfair? Why or why not?
10. Delphine tells Tilly, "But New Orleans prefer its custom to the law." In your own words, state the difference between a custom and a law. Name one law and one custom that plays a role in your life and explain why you think each is important.
11. Dr. Hutchings writes Tilly regularly until they are reunited after the war ends. Imagine you are Dr. Hutchings sitting down to write a letter to Tilly. What would you say to her? What would you ask her about life back in Grand Tower?

12. Tilly, Mama, and Delphine are all impacted by the outbreak of war. How does each character contribute to the war? How does each suffer as a result of the war? How are their war experiences different from the experiences of the men in the story?
13. At the end of the story, we learn that Delphine's son may go to Europe to be a doctor in the Great War. Based on what you learned about war in this story, would you support his decision to go to Europe as a doctor? Be specific, using evidence from the text to support your argument.
14. Who is narrating the story at the beginning and at the end of the book? What is this character's relationship to Tilly? Did you like the way the author split up the story into two time periods? Why or why not?
15. Why do you think the author chose Grand Tower as a setting for this story? Do you think it was a good choice? Make sure to use what you learned about the Civil War in the story and in the author's note in your answer.

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-13; Evaluation: 14-15*

### **Activities**

1. Draw a map of the Mississippi River from New Orleans to St. Louis. Note other key towns from the story on your map, including Cairo, Grand Tower, and Carbondale. Then trace the trips of these characters: Howard Leland Hutchings, Delphine and Calinda, and Noah Pruitt.
2. The story you just read includes many important historical dates. Using a reference book, look up the dates for the following events: Lincoln's Inauguration, The Battle of Bull Run, The Battle of Belmont, and the attack on Ft. Sumter. Then, construct a timeline showing the order of these events. Fill in the timeline with 3 to 5 events from the story.
3. At the end of the story, we learn Calinda chose to leave Grand Tower for California. Imagine you are Calinda writing a letter to Delphine and the Pruitts. Describe your journey westward and discuss what you are doing in California. Be sure to mention what you miss most about Illinois and what you like most about the West.

**Other Books by This Author:**

*A Long Way from Chicago*, Puffin (October 2000)

*A Year Down Yonder*, Puffin Modern Classics (April 2004)

*Fair Weather*, Puffin (March 2003)