

## Bridge to Terabithia Discussion Guide

Whenever a much-loved, award-winning book is made into a movie, it creates a great opportunity for family discussion (since parents don't always read their kids' books). These topics will get you started. (Spoiler alert: The last few questions hint at the ending.)

1. At the beginning of the movie, why does Jess have to wear hand-me-down pink shoes to school? In what two ways does this represent his home life? What do you think of all of Jess' chores? Do you have that much to do before school? How are Jess' and Leslie's parents different? Whose house would you like to visit and why?
2. Why does Jess not want to be friends with Leslie at first? What changes his mind? Why do viewers/readers root for Jess and Leslie to become friends? What happens on the bus that brings them together?
3. Jess is the odd one out both at home, where he has four sisters, and at school, where he's the quiet one who's easy to pick on. How does he learn to get along with his family? How does he escape?
4. Of all his sisters, Jess has the closest relationship with May Belle. Are you sad for May Belle when he pushes her away? Does he make up for it? How does Leslie try to help? Jess covers for May Belle when she's the reason for their dad's missing keys. Why do you think he does that?
5. At school, how does Jess deal with the bullies at first? Why is Leslie's "free the pee" revolt successful? After they pull the prank on Janice Avery, why do Jess and Leslie change their minds about her? How do they try to make amends? Have you ever felt bad for someone who bullies other kids?
6. Why do Leslie and Jess create Terabithia? How does the imaginary world strengthen their friendship? Why does it take longer for Jess to see this world as Leslie does? How does Terabithia help Jess realize he's a talented artist? Do you notice anything about the fantasy world that's reflected in the kids' real one? Who does the troll represent? How about the Squogres and the Dark Master?
7. Why does Jess' teacher tell him the story about her husband? How can it help Jess? Why does Leslie's dad decide to keep the dog? How can it help him deal with his feelings?
8. Why does Jess build the bridge? Why does he finally invite May Belle to Terabithia? Why do you think it's so easy for May Belle to picture what Jess describes to her? What do you think happened in Terabithia -- and to Jess -- after the end of the movie/book?
9. The movie's screenwriter, David Paterson, is the son of the book's author, Katherine Paterson, and the inspiration for the character of Jess. Do you think it was hard for him to relive this part of his childhood? How is it positive for him to have other people see the story?
10. What is it about loss that brings people together? How can you turn a personal loss into ways to help others?