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Introduction

This guide is divided into nine units of study, and includes the following components:

Pre-reading Discussion

This is a detailed section on the key elements that readers will encounter in the reading assignment. The Pre-reading Discussion centers on the literary elements of *Jacob Have I Loved* and gives suggestions for provoking interest in the chapters ahead. The section ends with ideas for initiating class discussions about the important concepts in the book.

Study Guide and Vocabulary List

Each unit contains a study guide and vocabulary list, along with a corresponding reading assignment. Study guide pages are designed to be duplicated and distributed when the reading assignment is given. Students should answer the questions and study the vocabulary words. Each study guide contains a “Writing Forum” section, in which students are asked to write a brief explication of some textual element. You may want to choose one or all of the questions listed; students may keep the Writing Forum questions in a continuing notebook. The following day’s class session could begin with a review of the written work before proceeding to a discussion of the chapters.

Discussion Concepts

This section details the important concepts that students have encountered in their reading of *Jacob Have I Loved* and may be used to initiate class discussions. Discussions should involve events in the story and their relevance to the characters, important themes, and comparing and contrasting actions and statements. Students should be able to find quotes to support their opinions when necessary. Teachers may want to ask students to practice note-taking periodically during this discussion.

Tests

Tests of comprehension and vocabulary are included in the *Jacob Have I Loved* guide. Varied formats challenge students to think intently and creatively about the material.

Writing Projects

The writing projects at the end of the guide may be used as students progress through *Jacob Have I Loved*, or after the class has finished Unit 9.

Background

Type of Literature

Jacob Have I Loved is categorized as realistic fiction. The events that take place in the novel could have taken place, but the characters and events are fictional.

Setting and Atmosphere

The setting of the story, or the time and place in which the events of the story occur, is tiny Rass Island on the Chesapeake Bay during the 1940's and 1950's. Chesapeake Bay is a two-hundred-mile arm of the Atlantic Ocean that runs north along the coast of Virginia and divides the state of Maryland into two sections. It varies from four to forty miles wide.

The isolation of the island setting, its climate, and the living conditions on the island directly shape the events of the plot and the personalities of the characters in the novel.

Vivid descriptions of crabbing and propping, the work habits of the watermen, and the strong influence of religion and nature provide an authentic background for the lives of the Bradshaws. The eccentricities of Aunt Trudy and Grandma, and the naïveté of clumsy Call and Louise are made believable by the island's remoteness. Even World War II does not affect the community to the same degree it does other parts of the United States. The reader is aware of its existence as a backdrop to Louise's internal struggle.

Character Development

The characters in *Jacob Have I Loved* are developed through their words, actions, and feelings. The events of the novel are experienced through the character of Louise, whose life is changed by the events that occur.

In the early pages of the story, Louise is an angry adolescent who resents Caroline, her twin sister; but by the end of the book she has grown into a confident, productive woman who faces obstacles with self-assurance and competence.

Louise experiences the turmoil of adolescence and blames Caroline, her mother, and her grandmother for every real or imagined problem in her life. Ever since Louise was a small child, she had heard the story of how Caroline, being frail, had received all the attention at their birth. Louise, the healthy twin, had been left to sleep in a crib. Louise feels less loved, "gray and shadow" to Caroline's "light and gold" in every aspect of their lives. Louise views herself as merely a shadow of the beautiful and talented Caroline and hears rejection of herself in every positive statement made about Caroline. She is lonely and clings desperately to her friendships with Call and the Captain.

Louise is reasonably satisfied with these relationships until Caroline joins them by solving the cat population problem and the Captain's problem of finding a home. Louise feels invaded by this, and is devastated. As Caroline becomes a part of the former threesome, Louise begins to withdraw into herself.

The Captain's decision to use Trudy's legacy to send Caroline to a boarding school where she can continue to study music triggers additional resentment and self-pity in Louise, followed by intense guilt. She enters a period of self-imposed hibernation by refusing to attend school or church and by exhausting herself in assisting her father on the boat.

During this time, the first time in her life that she is not living with Caroline, Louise begins to heal and to form goals for herself. By the time the novel ends, she is married and is a competent nurse-midwife in a small town that needs her urgently. When, finally, she delivers twins, one tiny and in breach position, and must fight for the life of the frail twin to the neglect of the healthy twin, she is able to resolve her feelings towards Caroline. She realizes that the central hurt in her life, that she was neglected from the moment Caroline was born only minutes after her own birth, grew out of the necessity of keeping the tiny baby alive and was not a deliberate mistreatment. Louise is finally able to recognize that she is a worthwhile and important person.

Plot

The plot consists of the series of events that introduce, develop, and resolve the major conflict in the story. Conflict exists in every narrative, and may appear in various forms. Conflict may exist between one person and another, between one person and a group, or between one person and nature or the environment. Several major conflicts may exist within one story; these are subplots. Conflicts are resolved, though not necessarily happily, by the end of the text.

The major conflict in *Jacob Have I Loved* is one that exists within Louise. Her conflicting perceptions of herself are played out in her relationships with Caroline, Call, the Captain, her mother and father, and her grandmother. Louise blames her own feelings of inadequacy on her sister, who is beautiful and musically gifted. Her conflict with her own lack of self-confidence intensifies with each incident in which Caroline demonstrates competence. Only when Caroline has left home, and both the Captain and Louise's mother force her to realize that her shortcomings are her own responsibilities, does Louise learn that she is equally capable of creating her own successes.

Point of View

Jacob Have I Loved is told from the first-person point of view. The reader is allowed to see and understand only what Louise sees and understands. In this way, the reader progresses with Louise as she resolves her difficulties.