

Blow Out the Moon

by Libby Koponen

Little, Brown & Company

A Reading and Discussion Guide

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SUMMARY:

Based on the author's experiences as a child, *Blow Out the Moon* is the story of a young girl who leaves America for England at eight years old. Libby is a high-spirited child looking forward to new friends and adventures. Her first few months in England, however, are difficult and dreary. When her parents allow her to attend a boarding school, Libby finally feels excited again. She makes wonderful friends, takes riding lessons, learns a new set of manners, and grows into a thoughtful, considerate child. The book includes many delightful pictures of the people and places Libby cherishes from this time in her life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Libby describe herself as a tomboy before she travels to England? How would you describe her upon her return to America?
2. What is sarcasm, and how was Libby hurt by it?
3. How does Libby describe her apartment when she arrives in England? What is the weather like? How do these things make her feel?
4. Why was Libby so opposed to drinking tea and singing God Save the Queen?
5. The Sibton Park brochure states "consideration for other people is at the root of good manners." What are some of the manners that Libby learns at the school? Do you agree with that way of behaving?
6. This book is based on the real experiences of the author. Why do you think she created a novel rather than write an autobiography?

Reactions to Literature:

1. Have you ever traveled on a large ship? What was that experience like for you?
2. Have you spent time away from your family? How did you deal with homesickness?
3. Libby was confident that people would like her before she moved to England. How do you feel when you meet new people?
4. What would you take on a long journey if you could only take 3 things?
5. Have you ever visited a place you read about in a book? What was your reaction?
6. What does Libby like best about America? What do you like best about America?

ACTIVITIES:

1. Make up a secret code or secret language with family or friends. Use this website for help: <http://www.42explore2.com/codes.htm>
2. Learn pig latin as a slang way of talking.
http://www.idioma-software.com/pig/pig_latin.html
3. For some great pictures explaining how to do cat's cradle, check out Libby's website: http://www.ifyoulovetoread.com/book/chten_cats.htm
4. Write in a journal every day. Be sure to include details that other people may find interesting. You could be a published author some day!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Reprinted from an interview with the author

http://www.educationoasis.com/resources/Articles/conversation_libby.htm

Almost everything in the book really happened. People who know me say, "I can hear your voice when I read it," or, "She sounds just like you." I think the main difference between Libby in the book and me is that I'm grown-up and she isn't - though she grows up over the course of the book. How that changes her is part of the story.

I started writing stories when I was seven (as Libby did in the book) and—also like her—have wanted to be a writer since before I can remember. But it's taken me my whole adult life (I'm now 54!!) to get a book published.

Many children have asked me about the title; it's a good question and hard to answer. It comes from the poem at the end of the book—the one about the girl being made to blow out the lamp (the kinds of lamps they had then were gas or kerosene and you did blow them out to put them out). In the poem, she blows so hard that she blows out the moon—her feelings are so strong and so powerful that she has the power to put out the moon. My title is encouraging kids to do that—to have those strong feelings and the energy and power that goes with them (many people lose this as they grow older). So, I wasn't saying that someone *did* blow out the moon but saying *to* do it: "Blow out the moon!"

Libby Koponen has traveled all over the world and ridden horses on every continent except Antarctica. She received her MFA in writing from Brown University. She lives in Boston.

HELPFUL LINKS:

Visit the author's website at <http://www.ifyoulovetoread.com/>

Further Reading:

Books set in boarding schools:

Bloomability by Sharon Creech

Boy by Roald Dahl

Charlie Bone and the Time Twister by Jenny Nimmo

Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling

The Little Princess by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Perils of Peppermints by Barbara Brooks Wallace

Books about the American Revolution:

The American Revolution for Kids: A History With 21 Activities by Janis Herbert

Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes

And Then What Happened, Paul Revere? by Jean Fritz

Why Not, Lafayette? by Jean Fritz

Will You Sign Here, John Hancock? by Jean Fritz

Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams? by Jean Fritz

Books mentioned by Libby:

Black Beauty by Anna Sewell

The Borrowers by Mary Norton

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Peter Pan by J. M. Barrie

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Any book by E. Nesbit



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