

The Silent Boy

by Lois Lowry

Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin

A Reading and Discussion Guide

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SUMMARY:

Set in a small town in rural Pennsylvania, Lois Lowry's story of the town doctor's curious daughter is filled with incidents of small town life in the early days of the 20th century. Katy Thatcher, the protagonist, is now a grandmother looking back at a tumultuous time in her childhood. During this period, the years of 1910 and 1911, she comes to know Jacob, an unusual boy who communicates with animals better than he interacts with people. Katy finds she is drawn to this "silent boy", and when Jacob is later involved in a tragic event, she realizes she is the only one in the small town who can understand him. This haunting tale of a unique friendship lingers in the reader's mind long after the final page is turned.

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at the Contents page. What do these chapter headings tell you about the story?
2. Why did the author start the book with a prologue? What do you learn about Katy Thatcher?
3. Life in a small town was very different in the early 1900s. What are some of the things that are similar today? What are some things that are different?
4. Why is Katy attracted to Jacob despite his unusual behavior and inability to talk?
5. Jacob saves a newborn lamb. How does this foreshadow future events in the story?
6. Lois Lowry asks, "What would have happened to a boy like Jacob if he had been born 50 years later?" How would you answer this question?
7. Katy's father encouraged her curiosity and included Katy in his daily life as a physician. How did these experiences influence her?

8. Why is Katy the only one who understands why Jacob brought the baby to her house?
9. Why did the author give the book this title?
10. Read the page entitled “1910” (page 3) in *Looking Back* by Lois Lowry. What connections can you make to *The Silent Boy*?
11. Lois Lowry believes that fiction “in order to say anything has to startle and upset you at some point.” How did this novel affect you and make you think?

ACTIVITIES:

1. Look at an old photograph of a person: one that you have at home or one that the teacher has in the classroom. Imagine that you are introducing this person to a friend. Write a paragraph describing the person. Who is he/she? When and where did he live? What did she do every day? Why would you like this person for a friend?
2. Find three old photographs. Each should have at least one person. Write a short story about the pictures. Think about the way Lois Lowry’s photographs went with her chapters. Does having the pictures in front of you make the story easier or more difficult to write?

HELPFUL LINKS:

Consult <http://www.loislowry.com> for more information about the author.

Look at http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press_release/silentboy/ for an interview with the author about the book.

Read *Autumn Street* and *Looking Back: a book of memories* by Lois Lowry.



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