

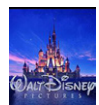
BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA: *Build Bridges*

A facilitator's guide for youth leaders, educators and families
to accompany the book and movie, *Bridge to Terabithia*
Ages 9-12



WWW.DISNEY.COM/TERABITHIA

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DEAR GROUP FACILITATOR:

Bridge to Terabithia, a Newbery Medal-winning book and Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media film, tells the story of the friendship between two unlikely fifth graders in rural Virginia. Jess Aarons, an artistic boy, comes from a large family, struggling to make ends meet. Leslie Burke, a creative and imaginative girl, is the only child of well-to-do parents that have recently moved to a neighboring farm house. As an escape from the pressures and hardships of school and family life, Jess and Leslie create the imaginary land of Terabithia in the woods near their homes. In their secret world they successfully battle the enemies of Terabithia and rule as king and queen. When a terrible tragedy occurs, Jess realizes just how much he has learned and gained from his friendship with Leslie.

Bridge to Terabithia, in both book and movie form, touches on important themes such as the power of imagination, overcoming fears, coping with tragedy, and building lasting relationships.

This guide, *Bridge to Terabithia: Build Bridges*, is structured for use before or after viewing the movie and/or reading the book. It offers group and individual activities for children ages 9 - 12. It is provided by the National Collaboration for Youth, an organization which provides a unified voice for its coalition of more than 50 national, nonprofit, youth development organizations. The 30-year-old organization concentrates on improving the conditions of youth in the United States and enabling youth to realize their full capabilities. As a result, youth empowerment and development play a central role in the activity guide for *Bridge to Terabithia*.





STEPS FOR YOUTH TO TAKE WITH THE *BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA: Build Bridges Program*

STEP 1) SEE THE FILM AND READ THE BOOK

THE MOVIE: *Bridge to Terabithia*, a Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media film, opens in theaters on February 16, 2007. Youth may also see the movie when it becomes available on DVD.

THE BOOK: *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson, is a Newbery Medal-winning book (1978). It is widely available in libraries and book stores.

STEP 2) PARTICIPATE

Take part in exciting reading, writing and interactive activities that address themes such as:

- > The power of imagination
- > Facing your fears
- > Anti-bullying
- > Building strong relationships
- > Dealing with tragedy

STEP 3) TAKE THE LEAD TO HELP OTHERS

Using examples of the kindness demonstrated by the story's lead characters, Jess and Leslie, young people are urged to learn to take on responsibility by designing and conducting a service project that brings the magic of Terabithia to others. Youth are also encouraged to learn about anti-bullying legislation and advocate for their schools. Ideas inside.

Use the free, downloadable service-learning supplement to assist in the planning and managing of *Bridge to Terabithia* service projects. Please visit www.youthFILMproject.org to download the supplement and to learn more about the film and book.





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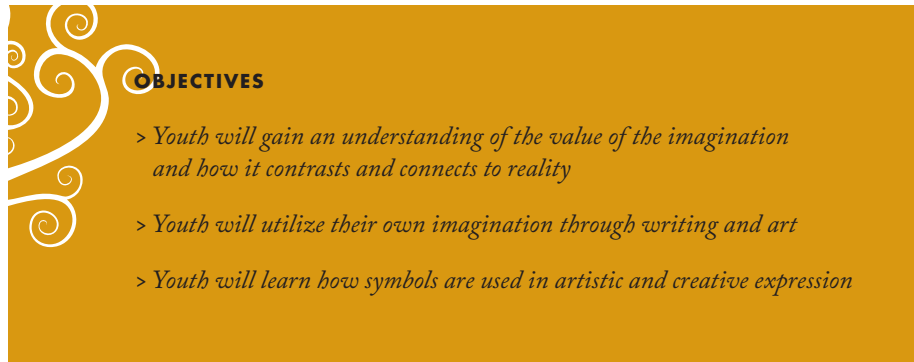
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NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR:

The activities in this module are designed to encourage youth to embrace their creativity and learn about the value of the imagination. In *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke recognize each others' creative skills and forge a friendship based upon the imaginative world they create. Without fully realizing it, Terabithia serves as a refuge from the struggles in their everyday lives. Both Jess and Leslie are confronted by bullies in school and difficulties at home that they feel powerless to confront. However, as valiant rulers in their imaginary kingdom, Jess and Leslie are able to defeat their powerful enemies. The lessons learned from Terabithia eventually allow Jess to cope with and overcome his real life obstacles.

Youth who take part in the following activities will recognize the empowering force of the imagination. The use of the imagination not only serves as a creative outlet for youth, but it can develop real life skills that are essential for positive youth development.



OBJECTIVES

- > *Youth will gain an understanding of the value of the imagination and how it contrasts and connects to reality*
- > *Youth will utilize their own imagination through writing and art*
- > *Youth will learn how symbols are used in artistic and creative expression*



ACTIVITY 1: *Imagination vs. Reality*

ACTIVITY TYPE: GROUP DISCUSSION

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

Jess Aarons dreams of becoming the fastest fifth grader on the playground; he practices throughout the summer with the hopes of fulfilling his goal. When he loses his race to the new girl in school, Jess's hopes of becoming a winner in the eyes of his family and classmates are crushed. Jess's disappointments seem endless. At home, he watches helplessly as his parents struggle with earning enough money to feed and clothe the family. As the middle child with two teenage sisters and two younger sisters, Jess longs for positive reinforcement and attention from his dad. At Lark Creek Elementary School, Jess suffers through daily confrontations with bullies like Gary Fulcher and Janice Avery.

IMAGINATION becomes Jess's escape from his difficult **REALITY**. Jess creates unusual animals, exotic beasts, and comical situations with his crayons and paper. When he befriends Leslie Burke, he meets someone who has the ability to use words to create magical stories that complement his pictures. As the new girl in school, sticking out with her funky clothes and short hair-cut, Leslie does not receive a warm reception from her classmates. Like Jess, she becomes the target of teasing and bullying. Although hesitant at first, Jess befriends Leslie and together they transform the nearby woods into a fantasy world called Terabithia.

Read the following passage from *Bridge to Terabithia*, the book. In this conversation between Leslie and Jess, the process of imagining is captured beautifully.

“Did I ever tell you the story of Hamlet?”

He rolled over on his back. “Not yet,” he said happily. Lord, he loved Leslie's stories. Someday, when he was good enough, he would ask her to write them in a book and let him do all the pictures.

“Well,” she began, “there was once a prince of Denmark, named Hamlet...”

In his head he drew the shadowy castle with the tortured prince pacing the parapets. How could you make a ghost come out of the fog? Crayons wouldn't do, of course, but with paints you could put one thin color on top of another so that you would begin to see a pale figure moving from deep inside the paper. He began to shiver. He knew he could do it if Leslie would let him use her paints.”

Bridge to Terabithia, by Katherine Paterson; HarperCollins. 1977. p. 67

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

IMAGINATION - the process of creating a mental picture of something that is unlike things one has seen

REALITY - something that constitutes a real or actual thing



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > How is drawing an escape for Jess? Why does he continue doing it despite the negative response from his father?
- > How do writing and art complement one another? What does artwork reveal that stories alone cannot? What do stories allow that artwork alone cannot? Explain the differences and similarities.
- > Why do you think Jess has trouble “seeing” the imaginary creatures and surroundings of Terabithia at first? Why does the ability to imagine come so naturally to Leslie?
- > How does reality blend into imagination throughout *Bridge to Terabithia*?
- > Which do you prefer – visualizing the land of Terabithia for yourself while reading the book, or seeing the images on the movie screen? Why?
- > Besides drawing and writing stories, what are other methods that people use to demonstrate their imagination and creativity? How do you use your imagination on a daily basis?
- > Have you ever created an imaginary place, person, or animal? Why did you do this? How did it make you feel?
- > Why do you think it’s typically more difficult for adults to use their imagination than it is for children?
- > Describe an activity that requires imagination (i.e., watching the clouds go by and wondering aloud about what you see).





ACTIVITY 2: *Explore Your Creativity*

ACTIVITY TYPE: PARTNER ACTIVITY

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

In *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jess and Leslie use the power of their imaginations to help develop their creative skills. Jess is an excellent artist and constantly adds to his notebook of drawings with characters, animals and make-believe creatures. Leslie excels at creative writing and speaking, and uses her skills to narrate their adventures in Terabithia. Through cooperation and in partnership, the two friends reach new creative heights.





Below is the excerpt from the script in which Leslie is asked to read a composition about her favorite hobby in front of Ms. Meyers' class.

LESLIE

(reading)

I'm moving gently forward over the wild and beautiful unexplored world below me. I am floating in a huge silence and breaking it up with the sound of my breath. Above me there is nothing but shimmery light, the place where I have come from and will go back to when I'm done here. I'm diving. I'm a SCUBA diver.... I'm going deeper past the wrinkled rocks and dark seaweed, toward a big blueness where a school of silver fish wait. As I swim through the water, bubbles burst from me, wobbling like little jellyfish as they rise. I check my air. I don't have as much time as I need to see everything, but that is what makes it so special.

Adapted from Bridge to Terabithia screenplay; Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media, pp. 19-20

As Leslie reads this very descriptive essay, Jess can visualize the deep, murky water, the glistening colors and the bubbles that quiver around her. He probably could make a very beautiful drawing or painting of her words. Later in the day, Jess has the following conversation with Leslie:

JESS

...I felt like I was there! Goin' way down where there's no air and any light! I think I'd freak out.

LESLIE

Yeah. I probably would too if I went.

She picks up a stone. Whips it off into the underbrush.

JESS

What do you mean if you went?

LESLIE

I never went scuba diving in my life.

JESS

You lied?

Leslie hops on a log. Deftly moves across it. Jess follows.

LESLIE

No. I wrote an essay about my favorite hobby. That doesn't mean I've actually done it! (spinning back at him) Have you ever seen a hippo? Or an alligator?

JESS

No...

LESLIE

Well, then, what's all that cool stuff in your drawing book? A bunch of lies?

Jess is about to protest... but then gets it. Smiles.

LESLIE

My mom says it's practice. For the stuff you want to actually do someday. She says you gotta keep your mind open. *Wide open.*



ACTIVITY 3: *Symbolism*

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ACTIVITY TYPE: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

In the real world Jess and Leslie have little control over the actions of bullies like Gary Fulcher and Janice Avery or their strict teacher Ms. Meyers. However, in Terabithia Jess and Leslie reign supreme and have the power to defeat their enemies. The imaginary kingdom of Terabithia becomes more than a fun, childish place for Leslie and Jess. The creation of Terabithia is a release from the pressures and hardships in their real lives that they can't control.

Have you ever seen something in nature or in your everyday surroundings that resembles something else? Maybe a tree from the corner of your eye looked like a person. Maybe the shadow on your wall at night seemed like a giant ghost. As Leslie imagines their kingdom in the woods, she perceives many items, such as the rope swing and tree house, as **SYMBOLS** for other things. She opens up the world of imagination to her new friend Jess. It takes him a while, but Jess begins to “see” the vivid landscape and magical beings that exist in their secret world. Because of the transition between imagination and reality throughout the story, there are a lot of similarities between the two worlds. In fact, the creatures and events that take place in Terabithia represent real-life people and occurrences.

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

SYMBOL - a form or image implying or representing something beyond its obvious and immediate meaning



INSTRUCTIONS:

Match the Terabithian items on the right with the real world items they are symbolic of on the left. After you are done with the matching exercise, re-join your group and discuss how and why the real world and imaginary things are connected.

REAL WORLD

TERABITHIA

Janice Avery

Terabithian stronghold

Mr. Aarons

Prince Terrien

Rope swing

Squ-ogres

Dragonflies

The Giant

Leslie's sweatshirt

Forces of Darkness

Pine cones

Terabithian flag

Jess and Leslie

Entrance to Terabithia

Gary Fulcher, Janice Avery, Ms. Meyers,
Mr. Aarons, Jess's sisters

Hornapologist

Tree house

Future Queen

May Belle

Hairy Vulcher

Leslie's dog

Rulers of Terabithia

Squirrels

Terabithian warriors

Gary Fulcher

Grenades

KEY QUESTIONS

- > How do some of the "Forces of Darkness" become forces of good by the end of the story? Why? What sparks the changes?
- > Which of the characters from the list is your favorite character in Terabithia? Why?
- > Are there people or things in your own life that could transform into Terabithian-like characters with your imagination? Share some examples.
- > Why does Jess eventually invite May Belle into his private world of Terabithia?
- > Why do you think creating imaginary symbols helps people cope with difficult situations?



MODULE TWO:
FACING YOUR FEARS

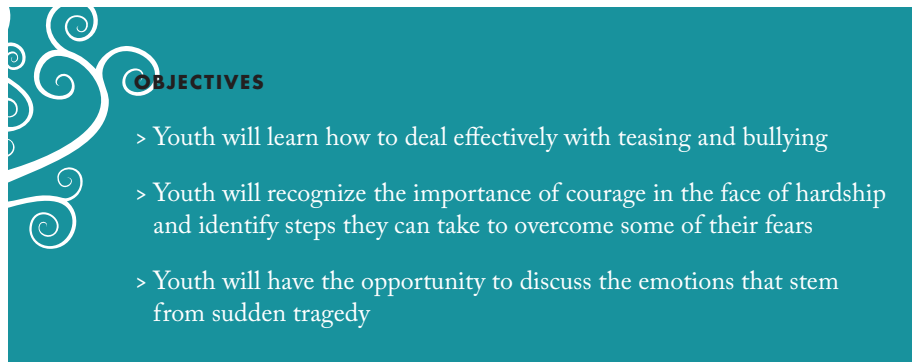
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In this module youth will partake in activities that address fears that may arise in coping with difficult situations such as bullying, teasing, and sudden tragedy. In *Bridge to Terabithia*, Leslie and Jess have daily confrontations with school bullies like Janice Avery and Gary Fulcher. How Leslie and Jess react to the taunting and physical mistreatment provides an interesting look into the social dynamics of bullying.

In order to deal with the bullying and fear of disappointing his father, Jess turns to Leslie. In her creation of Terabithia, a land in which no one is able to crush, hurt or destroy them, Jess slowly learns to overcome his many uncertainties. Leslie's sudden and tragic death fills Jess with a painful mixture of denial, anger, guilt and grief. However, Leslie's courage and strength inspire Jess to move forward and share her legacy with others.

Importantly, please tailor the activities to the life circumstances of the children and youth in your group. Many of us have been the victims of bullying, abuse or have endured tragedy in our everyday lives. As you facilitate the following activities please be sensitive to these themes.



OBJECTIVES

- > Youth will learn how to deal effectively with teasing and bullying
- > Youth will recognize the importance of courage in the face of hardship and identify steps they can take to overcome some of their fears
- > Youth will have the opportunity to discuss the emotions that stem from sudden tragedy



ACTIVITY 1: *Fear of Bullies*

ACTIVITY TYPE: GROUP DISCUSSION

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

In *Bridge to Terabithia* Jess and Leslie are unfairly subjected to teasing and bullying by several of their peers. Jess deals with the hurtful taunting of boys like Scott Hoager and Gary Fulcher on the playground and in the classroom. On the school bus both Jess and Leslie fear the bullying of Janice Avery, who reigns supreme over the back of the bus. With her unusual clothes and lifestyle (like not having a television set at home), Leslie becomes an easy target for snickering among the other fifth grade girls.

Jess and Leslie share a common struggle with bullying; instead of retaliating with violence, they choose to ignore the attacks and deal with it privately through their secret world of Terabithia. There, they reign as powerful rulers that cannot be crushed by anyone, even the “Forces of Darkness.”

This all changes when Janice Avery steals May Belle’s twinkies on the playground. Although he refuses to hurt Janice physically, Jess vows to seek revenge. His revenge proves that words are often more powerful than actions. Leslie and Jess write a fake love letter to Janice, signed by the most popular boy in the 7th grade, Willard Hughes. The letter succeeds – Janice Avery is humiliated when she learns that the letter is phony.

Although Jess and Leslie achieve their revenge, they soon realize that all people, even bullies, have their own problems and fragile emotions. When Leslie overhears Janice crying in the bathroom, Jess urges Leslie to overcome her fear of the school bully and reach out to someone in need of a friend. Later in the day, Leslie and Jess have the following conversation:

LESLIE

I can understand now why Janice has so many problems relating to people.

JESS

C’mon! What happened?

LESLIE

It’s between her and her dad. He’s a jerk.

Adapted from Bridge to Terabithia screenplay; Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media, p. 75



MODULE TWO:
FACING YOUR FEARS

Leslie explains to Jess the unfortunate news that Janice is abused by her father. Somehow rumors spread about it and that's why Janice is so upset. Leslie extends her kindness to Janice by offering advice:

“I told Janice about not having a TV and everyone laughing. I told her I understood what it was like to have everyone think I was weird.”

“What'd she say to that?”

“She knew I was telling the truth. She even asked me for advice as if I was Dear Abby.”

“Yeah?”

“I told her just to pretend she didn't know what on earth Wilma and Bobby Sue had said or where they had got such a crazy story and everybody would forget about it in a week.”

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson; HarperCollins. 1977. p. 97

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > Is it right for Jess and Leslie to write a fake letter to Janice as a way to get back at her? Why or why not? What would you do in their situation? What are some alternatives to seeking revenge?
- > Jess and Leslie are shocked when they observe that Janice is not invincible – she cries when she is teased just as others do when they are bullied by her. Think about any bullies you have experienced. Are they invincible in your eyes? Why or why not?
- > After all the pain that Janice has caused for Jess and Leslie, why do they decide to reach out to her when she is upset? Would you have been compassionate to her?
- > Do you agree with the advice Leslie offers Janice in the book? Why or why not?
- > How does learning of Janice's situation with her father change how Leslie and Jess perceive Janice and her behaviors?
- > Describe the change in Janice's behavior towards the end of the story. How does her symbolic character in Terabithia, “The Giant,” change, too?
- > Why do you think some children tease and bully one another? How does it make them feel? How do their victims of the teasing and bullying feel?
- > How do you believe bullying can be prevented in schools? What are steps you can take to contribute?

ANTI-BULLYING RESOURCES:

[HTTP://WWW.DONTLAUGH.ORG/](http://www.dontlaugh.org/)

[HTTP://WWW.BULLYPOLICE.ORG/](http://www.bullypolice.org/)

[WWW.YOUTHPOLICYACTIONCENTER.ORG](http://www.youthpolicyactioncenter.org)



ACTIVITY 2: *It Takes Courage*

ACTIVITY TYPE: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

In *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jess Aarons struggles with many fears. Many of his apprehensions include the following:

- > Confronting Janice Avery on the bus
- > Losing his race on the school playground
- > Disappointing his father, Mr. Aarons
- > Crossing the creek on the old rope swing
- > Venturing deeper into the woods of Terabithia

In *Terabithia* no enemy, not even Jess's own fears and insufficiencies, can ever defeat him. Leslie helps **EMPOWER** him with confidence that in turn transforms how he approaches everyday life. But, even Leslie Burke has fears. She is very afraid of Janice Avery and it takes a lot for her to venture into the girls' bathroom when Janice is upset.

WHAT ARE YOUR FEARS?

Everyone has fears, even those who try to act like they don't. An example is Janice Avery, who despite her tough exterior, is found crying one day in the girls' bathroom. It is important to realize that there are different types of fears. Some are important to have, especially while you are a kid, because of safety concerns. For example, Jess was correct in being fearful of the old swinging rope over the creek bed because of the tragedy that results from the rope eventually breaking. Being fearful of someone or something because of your own well-being is normal and it is important to use proper judgment. Seeking the advice or help from a trusted adult in a fearful situation is key.

Some people have irrational fears that are incredibly strong and very difficult to get over. These are referred to as **PHOBIAS**. Examples include **CLAUSTROPHOBIA** (fear of enclosed space) **ARACHNOPHOBIA** (abnormal fear of spiders) and **ACROPHOBIA** (fear of heights).

You may have some fears similar to the types mentioned above. For example, you may be afraid to cross the busy intersection near your house alone or you may have a phobia of spiders, snakes or some other object or situation. However, you probably have some fears that are important to work on overcoming.

For Jess, these fears include interacting with Janice Avery and disappointing his father. Throughout the course of the book/movie, Jess finds the courage to crush these fears and build positive relationships.

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

EMPOWER - give qualities or abilities to

COURAGE - strength to face danger or take on challenges

PHOBIAS - fears of specific objects, situations, or activities that do not seem to make much sense and cause great anxiety



MODULE TWO:
FACING YOUR FEARS

In the space below make a short list of several fears that you want to rise above.

FEARS THAT I WANT TO OVERCOME:

NEXT, PICK THE ONE FEAR THAT YOU ARE MOST DETERMINED TO WORK ON.

THIS IS MY FEAR OF: _____

THIS FEAR MAKES ME FEEL:

STEPS I CAN TAKE TO ADDRESS THIS FEAR:

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP ME OVERCOME MY FEAR INCLUDE:

WHEN I FACE MY FEAR, I WILL FEEL:



ACTIVITY 3: *Dealing with Tragedy*

ACTIVITY TYPE: GROUP DISCUSSION

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

Bridge to Terabithia is an uplifting story of imagination and friendship, but it also contains a tragedy that brings up painful issues like death, sadness and regret. When Leslie dies suddenly, Jess is incredibly fearful and confused. In their imaginary world of Terabithia, he and Leslie are unable to be hurt or killed by the dark forces that surround them. With Leslie's passing, Jess realizes that the real world is much more fragile. He does not know how to accept the horrible news that his closest friend is gone forever. Like many people who endure the loss of close friends or family members, Jess's courage and strength to move forward are put to the test. The following passage from the book demonstrates Jess's realization that Leslie has made a huge positive impact on his life and how he wishes to continue her legacy.

He thought about it all day, how before Leslie came, he had been a nothing – a stupid, weird little kid who drew funny pictures and chased around a cow field trying to act big – trying to hide a whole mob of foolish little fears running riot inside his gut.

It was Leslie who had taken him from the cow pasture into Terabithia and turned him into a king. He had thought that was it. Wasn't king the best you could be? Now it occurred to him that perhaps Terabithia was like a castle where you came to be knighted. After you stayed for a while and grew strong you had to move on. For hadn't Leslie, even in Terabithia, tried to push back the walls of his mind and make him see beyond to the shining world – huge and terrible and beautiful and very fragile? (Handle with care – everything – even the predators.)

Now it was time for him to move out. She wasn't there, so he must go for both of them. It was up to him to pay back to the world in beauty and caring what Leslie had loaned him in vision and strength.

As for the terrors ahead – for he did not fool himself that they were all behind him – well, you just have to stand up to your fear and not let it squeeze you white...

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson; HarperCollins. 1977, pp. 160–161



READING THAT TAKES YOU BEHIND THE STORY

The author of *Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Paterson, used experiences in her own life to inspire the tragedy of the book, which was written in 1977. On her website, Katherine Paterson answered recent interview questions from children and educators. Here are a few of them that deal with the tragedy of the story:

Did anything happen in your life, or did something you read inspire you to write any of your books?

I wrote *Bridge* because our son David's best friend, an eight-year-old named Lisa Hill, was struck and killed by lightning. I wrote the book to try to make sense out of a tragedy that seemed senseless.

I read that your son had an experience like Jess's in *Bridge to Terabithia* ... losing a close friend in a freak accident. How did your son respond to the book? Was there a therapeutic value in this for him?

David still, now with two little boys of his own, finds *Bridge* a very difficult book to read. It's too close to the bone. Any therapeutic value the book had was for me, facing not only Lisa's death but my own mortality call. I had cancer that year and was hearing the bell toll.

© 2007 Katherine Paterson

EXTEND THE LEARNING

To learn more about Katherine Paterson and her many children's books, visit her official website at WWW.TERABITHIA.COM.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > In the previous passage from the book, it reads, "It was up to him to pay back to the world in beauty and caring what Leslie had loaned him in vision and strength." Explain how Leslie has given Jess vision and strength. How does Jess demonstrate acts of kindness towards the end of the story?
- > Katherine Paterson decided to write *Bridge to Terabithia* after her son's best friend died and when she was battling cancer. How do writing and other forms of creativity help during difficult times?
- > Describe the various emotions that Jess experiences after learning of Leslie's death.
- > Can you think of someone in your family or community who left a positive legacy after he/she died? How can someone "live on" and affect others even after they have died?
- > In the story Jess is filled with guilt for Leslie's death. He purposely does not invite her to the museum with Ms. Edmunds. Leslie ends up dying that morning on her way to Terabithia. Do you think Jess should feel guilty? Why or why not?

Visit WWW.RAINBOWS.ORG to access resources that can help children cope with grief and life-changing crises.



MODULE THREE:
BUILDING BRIDGES WITH OTHERS

NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR:

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In this module youth will be exposed to activities that allow them to perceive the differences between families and other support systems and how these variations can affect and shape people. Youth will acknowledge that every family is different. Furthermore, youth will learn the importance of reaching out to others, despite the differences, in an attempt to forge lasting, positive relationships.

Importantly, please tailor the activities to the life circumstances of the children and youth in your group. Many of us have home or everyday situations that may differ or relate to those depicted in the book and film. For example, some youth may have tumultuous relationships with family members or peers like Jess. Be sure to create a supportive environment for discussion and reflection and opportunities for children in need to be referred to a counselor as appropriate.





ACTIVITY 1: *Different Families*

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ACTIVITY TYPE: INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP ACTIVITY

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke have noticeably different families. Although they are neighbors in the same small Virginian town, their families have unique characteristics and lifestyles. Along with many other factors, this has an effect on how Jess and Leslie develop.





MODULE THREE:
BUILDING BRIDGES WITH OTHERS

Below is a chart that describes the differences between the two families. Fill in the blanks. Answer the questions (either individually or as a group) that coincide with each category:

| CHARACTERISTICS | JESS'S FAMILY: THE AARONS | LESLIE'S FAMILY: THE BURKES | QUESTIONS |
|--|--|---|--|
| WHO IS IN THE FAMILY? | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. | 1. 2. 3. | How does the number of family members affect the attention Jess and Leslie each receive? What affect does it have on their everyday lives? |
| PETS | | | Why doesn't Mr. Burke want to give the dog up after Leslie dies? Do you think pets are important family members? Why or why not? |
| FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS | JESS AND HIS SISTERS? JESS AND HIS DAD? | LESLIE AND HER PARENTS | Why do Jess and Leslie have such different relationships with their parents? Is Jess jealous of Leslie's closeness with her dad? Explain. |
| LIFESTYLE | | | Describe in detail some of the differences around the two houses (i.e. appliances, food, furniture, etc.) |
| JOBS OF PARENTS | MR. AARONS: MRS. AARONS: | MR. BURKE: MRS. BURKE: | Do the professions of the parents have an effect on the interests and goals of Jess and Leslie? If so, how? |
| GAMES, TOYS AND ART SUPPLIES AROUND THE HOUSE | | | How does Leslie demonstrate kindness and generosity with some of her belongings? |
| OTHER DIFFERENCE | | | |



ACTIVITY 2: *Strengthening Relationships*

ACTIVITY TYPE: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

When Jess builds the wooden bridge to Terabithia at the conclusion of the story, it symbolizes his ability to build bridges with several family members and friends. Throughout the story there are characters with remarkable differences that, through shared experiences and communication, learn to respect and relate to one another.

Jess has a particularly unstable relationship with his father. Although Jess's dad is a hard-working, loving man (as demonstrated by the care he shows to Jess's little sisters), he does not pay adequate attention to Jess. Jess longs to be appreciated and loved by his father and must feel a lot of pain when Mr. Aarons writes off his artistic accomplishments and disregards his hard work in their greenhouse. Read the following excerpt from the script, which depicts a confrontation between Jess and his dad.

READING FROM THE SCRIPT

(This could also be a role-play activity in which 2 participants volunteer to act out the scene).

THROUGH THE DOOR OF THE GREENHOUSE

Mr. Aarons holds one of the lush miniature roses by his side. And then hurls it across the greenhouse. It shatters where several other plants have already done so.

Jess enters, but Mr. Aarons doesn't turn to acknowledge him. He picks up another potted rose.

JESS

(extremely tenuous)

I watered them this morning, and the furnace is all set. I...

Mr. Aarons turns to Jess, on edge, barking angrily.

MR. AARONS

That's not enough. Not enough. It doesn't matter how carefully you look after these. Nothing you do is gonna get the damn things sold.

Mr. Aarons hurls the rose. It shatters among the others.

Jess is startled. What's going on? Is this his fault?

JESS

I watered them, and did the furnace and... I can still help more.

MR. AARONS

Yeah. Why don't you go draw up some money. That'd help. That'd help with the house. And the food. And the clothes. And getting the damn truck fixed. Just go and draw me up a little money. Can you do that. Jess?

He stares at Jess... who finally manages a quiet answer.



JESS

N...no.

MR. AARONS

Well, then...What is it you like so much about all that drawing?

JESS

(balting)

I like to... imagine stuff.

Mr. Aarons laughs. A rueful little laugh.

MR. AARONS

I like to imagine stuff too. I imagined these thousand plants were gonna bring in four dollars each. I imagined that my boss at the store would stick by his agreeing he'd buy them when they budded – even if someone else shows up at the last minute ready to unload a truckload from hell-knows-where for next to nothing! I imagined that this'd all be a way of getting the nursery back on its feet.

Jess doesn't know what to say. What can he say? This is all way beyond him.

MR. AARONS

So you imagine all you want, but just remember it's not gonna get you anywhere.

Mr. Aarons just looks at Jess. Heads out. Deeply confused. Does his father just plain hate him? He looks off towards the woods, towards Terabithia. Needing to go there.

Adapted from Bridge to Terabithia screenplay; Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media, pp. 54 - 56

KEY QUESTIONS

- > Does Mr. Aarons hate Jess? Why do you think he takes out his anger on him?
- > Why is Mr. Aarons not supportive of Jess's imagination and creativity? Why does he tell him it's not going to get him anywhere?
- > Why does this situation make Jess want to venture into Terabithia?
- > What would you tell Mr. Aarons to make him more appreciative and accepting of his son?

When Leslie dies, Jess needs his father's affection the most. After seeing his son in pain over the loss of his best friend, Mr. Aarons begins to bridge the gap in their relationship and accept Jess for who he is. Just as the relationship between Jess and his father begins to heal, so do other relationships in the story.



MODULE THREE:
BUILDING BRIDGES WITH OTHERS

BUILDING BRIDGES

Use the outer boxes of the diagrams below to describe why/how each set of characters are different and have a hard time getting along; in the shared “bridge” section of each diagram describe their similarities and how they find common ground. Follow the example of Jess and his father in the first diagram. Fill in the blanks for the rest.

JESS

- > Very into art, but dad does not approve
- > Uses his imagination
- > Jealous of attention his sisters receive from dad
- > Struggles to make father proud

THE BRIDGE

- > Mr. Aarons reaches out to son when Leslie dies
- > Mr. Aarons recognizes Jess’s artistic abilities and begins to support his efforts

MR. AARONS

- > Works hard to earn a living
- > Takes out anger with himself on Jess
- > As an adult, has lost his sense of hope and imagination

JESS

- > Wants to win the race on the playground
- >
- >
- >

THE BRIDGE

- >
- >

LESLIE

- > Joins in the boys’ race and wins
- >
- >
- >

JESS

- > 10-year-old student
- >
- >
- >

THE BRIDGE

- >

MS. MEYERS

- > 5th grade teacher
- >
- >
- >

LESLIE

- > Bullied by Janice on the bus
- >
- >

THE BRIDGE

- >
- >

JANICE

- > Bullies Leslie and others
- >
- >

YOU

- >
- >
- >

THE BRIDGE

- >

SOMEONE WHO IS HARD TO GET ALONG WITH: _____

- >
- >
- >



ACTIVITY 3: *Finding and Becoming a Mentor*

ACTIVITY TYPE: INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

LINK TO THE FILM AND BOOK:

NOTE: *This may be read aloud by a group member/the facilitator for all to hear, or it may be individual reading before the activity.*

In *Bridge to Terabithia* Jess does not receive outside support and positive feedback for his artwork. Fearful of his father’s negative reaction to his drawings, Jess even goes to lengths to hide them. When Leslie meets Jess, she is highly impressed by his talent and encourages him to continue drawing and painting.

In addition to having Leslie’s support, Jess has the reinforcement of his favorite teacher, Ms. Edmunds. As Lark Creek Elementary School’s music teacher, Ms. Edmunds has an appreciation for all forms of art and creative expression. In the book, which is set in the late 1970s (when it was written), Ms. Edmunds sings popular songs of the time period from children’s albums like “Free to Be...You and Me.” This is a record album and illustrated songbook for children, that addresses values such as individuality, tolerance, and happiness with one’s identity; a central theme is that anyone, whether a boy or a girl, can achieve what they want. In the modernized movie version (set in present-day), Ms. Edmunds sings a variety of popular country and rock songs that express specific messages and sentiments. Examples include “Why Can’t We Be Friends?” by a 1970s rock group called “War” and “Someday” by country singer Steve Earle.

Ms. Edmunds is quick to take notice of Jess’s exceptional artistic talent. However, in order to improve and develop one’s skills, it is essential to learn from the paintings, designs and sculptures of other artists. Because Jess comes from a large family that struggles financially, he has never traveled into the city before. By taking him to the art museums in Washington D.C., Ms. Edmunds exposes Jess to the great works of famous artists like Hieronymous Bosch and Da Vinci. By feeding Jess’s knowledge in the subject area he is most interested in, Ms. Edmunds becomes a **MENTOR**. Just as Ms. Edmunds is impressed by Jess’s talent, Jess is equally impressed by Ms. Edmund’s depth of knowledge:

KEY WORDS & IDEAS

MENTOR - a person who provides guidance and recommendations to another person for courses of action and behavior



MS. EDMUNDS

A miracle. Behold the sun! It's been so rainy this month, I was beginning to think she's gone into a cave and vowed never to return. Like the Japanese myth.

JESS

You know Japanese myths? And art. And music, and... like everything?

MS. EDMUNDS

Not like everything. Not by a long shot. But hang in there, Jess. When you rack up as much time as I have spinning around on this 'ol planet, you can't help but learn a lot. Just got to keep your mind open.

JESS

That's what Leslie says. She says keep it "wide open."

MS. EDMUNDS

Well, she's right. A mind like yours left wide open – who knows what could happen? You could create a whole new world!

Adapted from Bridge to Terabithia screenplay; Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media, p. 88

Do you have a friend, peer, or adult who serves as a mentor to you in a particular subject area, activity, or interest? If so, explain the relationship and what you have learned from him/her in the space below.

Four horizontal lines for writing, enclosed in a decorative green scalloped border.

If not, you may wish to seek out a mentor who can help you gain skills and expertise in a particular area. Think about your interests and brainstorm possibilities. Maybe someone like an older friend, sibling, cousin, parent or grandparent can offer you support or advice. Find adult professionals in the area you are interested in who are willing to volunteer their time to expose you to new ideas and experiences, like Ms. Edmunds. Keep track of your growth and development in a journal.

Similarly, you can become a mentor for someone else! Do you have a talent, skill or interest that you have developed? If so, offer your advice and expertise to a peer, younger child or even older adult who aspires in that area. You have the ability to make a huge difference in the life of someone else, just as Ms. Edmunds does for Jess!



MODULE FOUR:
TAKE THE LEAD TO HELP OTHERS

NOTES FOR THE FACILITATOR:

This module allows youth to explore actions they can take as individuals and in groups to reach out to others with the magic of Terabithia. Through generosity and acts of kindness, youth will realize they are capable of making a lasting impact on the lives of community members. The activities are designed to heighten youth awareness of how they can have immediate as well as lasting positive impact on the recipients of their generosity.

As young people develop throughout the preteen years of 9 -12, they benefit greatly from experiencing their own personal power, capabilities and talents. Parents, educators, youth leaders and child development specialists know that the best way for youth to learn responsibility is to take on responsibility. This process is captured in both the book and the movie, *Bridge to Terabithia*, in the characters of Leslie and Jess. The following activities will encourage youth to act on their beliefs and to communicate effectively with adults.



ACTIVITY 1: *Service Project Designed to Reach Out to Others in Need*

ACTIVITY TYPE: GROUP ACTIVITY

DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE:

Think about a service project that your group would like to do to reach out to people in need of companionship or assistance. As targets of bullying in their school, Jess and Leslie reach out to one another and become unlikely friends. When they realize that the school bully, Janice Avery, is very upset, they have the courage to reach out to her as well. Think about ways that you can reach out to a person or group of people who would appreciate your kindness and generosity.

LOOK FOR WAYS TO WORK IN COOPERATION WITH ADULTS.

- > Plan and conduct your project with the guidance and support of an adult partner.
- > Read some of the tips for working well with adults on the next page.
- > Have your adult partner(s) read the tips for adults.
- > Brainstorm your project ideas and plan the steps to carry it out. Use the F.I.L.M. service-learning supplement, available at www.youthfilmproject.org
- > Then, get to work!!

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS—BUT, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO ORGANIZE YOUR OWN WAYS TO TAKE THE LEAD!

- > Clean up a community park or a neighbor's backyard and bring them the magic of Terabithia! (you could even partner with a community hardware store to build a swing-set or tree-house for children to create their own magical places)
- > Write and read aloud your own imaginative stories to younger kids or senior citizens
- > Paint a colorful, innovative mural on the wall of a community building, school, or library
- > Perform a puppet show of *Bridge to Terabithia*
- > Follow in the example of the running competition on the playground of Lark Creek Elementary School; hold a running or sports clinic for younger youth - emphasize the importance of outdoor activity, exercise and sportsmanship (use the National Wildlife Federation's new "Green Hour" website as a resource for getting outside, www.greenhour.org)



3 TIPS FOR KIDS WORKING WITH ADULTS

1. Most adults have good intentions. Remember, they are simply not used to working in partnership with young people.
2. When adults criticize you, it doesn't necessarily mean they are putting you down or don't value your contribution; it may mean the adult is treating you the same way he/ she would another adult.
3. Adults may not be aware of the capabilities of young people. Show them what you know.

3 TIPS FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH KIDS

1. Share the responsibility of leadership. Provide guidance, but avoid total control. Be sure to share decision-making.
2. Listen carefully to youth and try to understand their perspectives, without interrupting or reinterpreting.
3. Share all work activities, even the tedious ones.



ACTIVITY 2: *Advocate Against Bullying in Your Schools*

ACTIVITY TYPE: INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE:

In addition to service projects (see Module Four, Activity 1 and the Service-Learning Supplement) – you can also be a powerful champion for change.

The Youth Policy Action Center at www.youthpolicyactioncenter.org or 1-866-MOBILIZE, provides lots of tips and information for youth who have seen something in their community or heard something on the news that they wish to change. The Center gives young people the same “tools” used by professional lobbyists to work to change laws and other ways that elected officials respond to young people’s concerns about issues of importance.

Throughout *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jess and Leslie are met by bullies such as Janice Avery and Gary Fulcher. Janice Avery ruthlessly torments younger youth with verbal and physical intimidation. At recess on the school playground, she and her friends guard the girls’ bathroom and refuse to let anyone enter without paying first. Tired of Janice’s bullying, Leslie briefly initiates a “Free the Pee” chant on the playground. This is the first step to advocacy!

Bullying is an issue that affects nearly every school throughout the country. However, you can help push for legislation that will help stop it from happening! The National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), one of the partners in the F.I.L.M. project, worked with GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) to create a back to school action alert to generate more attention to the problems of bullying in our schools, and the need for more co-sponsors to this bipartisan bill. To learn more about this action alert and how you can get involved, visit the “Take Action” web page of F.I.L.M. at www.youthfilmproject.org/film/action.htm.

In addition to anti-bullying, are there other issues in your school that you would like to address? Sometimes these changes can be made through the efforts of students, parents, community members and teachers. Larger, more systematic changes might require education reform on the national level through the passing of legislation. Below is a short list of educational issues that you may wish to advocate for, but it’s important to pursue a topic that is of relevance and importance to your school!

- > Creation of more after-school programs and sports teams
- > Tutoring programs
- > More healthy food choices in the cafeteria
- > New textbooks and supplies in the classroom
- > Saving music and arts programs
- > Making service-learning a part of classroom curriculum



FIVE KEY STEPS FOR BEING A CHAMPION FOR CHANGE

(adapted from the Youth Policy Action Center)

WWW.YOUTHPOLICYACTIONCENTER.ORG OR 1-866-MOBILIZE

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- 1. PICK AN ISSUE.** Maybe like Jess and Leslie in *Bridge to Terabithia*, you will realize that if you don't take a stand, no one will. Be sure you are clear on **WHAT** you want to change.
- 2. STUDY UP.** Even though studying is not everyone's idea of fun time, putting in a little time to really understand an issue and **WHY** it matters, is important. You want to be able to convince your friends, adults and elected officials that what you say matters.
- 3. FIND ALLIES.** You don't have to run a campaign by yourself. Chances are there are others who are interested in the same issue – and want to help. Find them.
- 4. DEVELOP A STRATEGY.** While most of us experience the world broadly (we like or don't like our school, we do or don't feel safe in our neighborhoods), simply saying we want to improve the schools or our neighborhoods is not enough to get an elected official to do what we want. **FOCUS** on what specifically you would like elected officials to do. And, **FOCUS** on the right officials for your cause.
- 5. LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN.** Send messages. Public officials keep track of how many messages they receive on specific topics. **WRITE, CALL** and **USE THE MEDIA.**





BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA:
POST PROGRAM EVALUATION

Facilitators of the *Bridge to Terabithia: Build Bridges* program - Please take a few moments to answer the questions below. It should only take about 5 minutes. Once you have submitted the survey you will be entered to win a copy of the DVD, book and an activity guide. *Good Luck!*

Organization: _____ City/State: _____

Contact Name: _____ Contact Email: _____

Organization Website: _____

Approximately how many youth does your organization serve? _____

How do you classify your organization?

School Based

Library or Museum

Faith Based

Child Care

After School

Community Based

Out of School

Unsure

Parks and Recreation

Other (please specify)

Approximately how many youth completed one or more steps in the *Bridge to Terabithia* program?

Steps include: See the Movie and Read the Book, Participate in Activities from the Activity Guide, Complete a Service Project

What age range participated in the program? _____

Please rate your overall impression of the activity guide. _____

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------|-----|---|
| (5) | (4) | (3) | (2) | (1) |
| Useful and appropriate for my organization | | Moderately useful | | Not at all useful or appropriate for my organization |

Comments

Please give us any additional feedback and/or suggestions you have to help us improve our future F.I.L.M. programs.

May we contact you for additional information? Yes No

If yes, what is the best way to contact you? _____