

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park

A Reading Guide

Reading One: Chapters 1-3; pages 1-19

Reading Two: Chapters 4-6; pages 20-38

Reading Three: Chapters 7-10; pages 39-63

Reading Four: Chapters 11-13; pages 64-82

Reading Five: Chapters 14-15; pages 83-96

Reading Six: Chapters 16-18 (plus Author's Note); pages 97-120

Reading One: Chapters 1-3; pages 1-19

Vocabulary:

Droned (2)
Grazing (3)
Dress (the animal) (4)
Headscarf (5)
The Bush (6)
Littered (8)
Veered (8)
Scurried (12)
Gourd (14)
Flinched (16)
Ritual (19)

Reading Questions:

Chapter One:

What are the two settings of this story? (1)
Who are the two characters first introduced on page 1? How old is each one? (1)
Why would a writer tell two stories of two characters at two times in an alternating way?
How does Nya feel about fetching water? How do you know? (1)
How does Salva feel about school? How do you know? (1-3)
How does Salva feel about his village? How do you know? (1-3)
What happens to Salva while he is at school? To what extent does he understand what is happening? (5-7)

Chapter Two:

What happens to Nya as she fetches the water? What could this event symbolize about Nya's life? (8)
How do the people whom Salva meets organize themselves, at first? Why? (8-10)
How are the people whom Salva meets organized by the rebels? Why? (10-12)
What questions does Salva repeat as he tries to fall asleep? Why? (12)
What does Salva discover when he wakes up? (13)

Chapter Three:

What kind of process does Nya go through to prepare for the walk home? How long will the walk be? (14-15)
Who are the Nuer and the Dinka? What is their shared history like? How does Salva tell who is in which tribe? (15-17)
Whom does Salva stay with? For how long does he stay? What does he do while he is there?
Why does he have to leave? (16-19)

Reading Two: Chapters 4-6; pages 20-38

Vocabulary:

Sorghum (20)
Terrain (22)
Sluggishly (23)
Furrowed (24)
Seep (27)
Gingerly (28)
Luscious (28)
Makeshift (33)
Solemn (35)
Topi (36)

Reading Questions:

Chapter Four:

How does Nya react to hearing her mother say that Nya should take Akeer with her to fetch the next container of water? Why does she react in this manner? (20)
Who takes Salva with them? Why are they reluctant to take him with them at first? What causes one of them to make the decision to let him come? (21-22)
Who is Buksa? What special talent does he have? (23-24)

Chapter Five:

What is the difference between the pond and the lake? What are the pros and cons of each? (26-27)
What is the process that Nya needs to do to fetch water by the lake? Why? Compare and contrast this process of fetching water by the lake to the process of fetching water near the pond – how similar and how different? (26-27)
Why are Salva's eyes swollen shut at the start of chapter five? (27-28)
Who is Marial? How do Salva and Marial meet? What do they have in common? (29-30)
Where do Marial and Salva think that they are walking? (30-31)
Who are the Atuot? What are they called? What kinds of stories do the Dinka tell about the Atuot? (31-32)

Chapter Six:

Why does Nya like the camp at the lake better than her home? (33)
Why does Nya's mother hate the camp? What, in particular, is she afraid of? (33-34)
Whom does Salva meet in chapter six? What does this person do upon meeting with Salva? (34-36)
What happens to Marial at the end of chapter six? How does Salva find out? (36-38)

Reading Three: Chapters 7-10; pages 39-63

Vocabulary:

Stalking (40)
Splotches (41)
Papyrus (43)
Prow (44)
Monotonous (46)
Gauge (46)
Cassava (47)
Swarmed (50)
Emerged (51)
Acacia (52)
Relentless (52)
Arid (52)
Gored (52)
Parched (53)
Tamarind (54)
Ravaged (59)

Reading Questions:

Chapter Seven:

What dilemma does Nya's family have in chapter seven? (39-40)
How does Salva's uncle try and reassure Salva? Does it work? Why/why not? (40-41)
How does the setting change in chapter seven? What is positive about the change and what is challenging? (42-44)
What does the group Salva is with build? How does Salva help? (42-44)

Chapter Eight:

What advice does Nya's mother get from the nurse that the family visits to get Akeer medical attention? How does Nya's mother respond to this advice? Why? (45-46)
How do the fishermen on the island in the middle of the river treat Salva's uncle? Why? (46-47)
What does Salva remember about his home while he sucks on the sugar cane? How does this memory make him feel? Explain. (48-49)
What do the fishermen abruptly do all at once when the sun started to set? Why did they all do this? (49)
What happened to Salva and his group the night they were on the island at the middle of the river? (49-50)

Chapter Nine:

What is the setting of the Akobo Desert like? What kinds of experiences does Salva have during the first day in the Akobo Desert? (52-54)
What advice does Salva's uncle give Salva when Salva lags behind the group in the Akobo Desert? (53-54)
During the second day in the Akobo Desert, what kinds of people does the group whom Salva is with witness? How does one of the members of Salva's group attempt to interact with this group? What kind of criticism is levelled at this person? (54-56)

Chapter Ten:

What do the strangers who visit Nya's village say can be found between the two largest trees?

What does Nya think about this claim? Why? (57-58)

What happens to the group that Salva's group interacts with and the group they have to leave behind? (58-59)

What does Salva discover during a conversation he has with his uncle (about his uncle's plans) during the third day in the Akobo Desert? (59-61)

How does the setting start to change at the end of the third day in the Akobo Desert? (61)

Who shows up when the group Salva is with roasts the dead stork? What happens to his uncle? (61-63)

Reading Four: Chapters 11-13; pages 64-82

Vocabulary:

Scythed (64)

Hoed (64)

Mourn (65)

Refugee (65)

Maize (68)

Emaciated (68)

Clangor (71)

Aid workers (73)

Masses (74)

Torrents (74)

Earnestly (76-77)

Plunged (77)

Din (78)

Reading Questions:

Chapter Eleven:

How does Nya feel about the patch of ground that the strangers are clearing in their village? (64)

How does Salva's status change in the group after his uncle is killed? How does this change in status make Salva feel? (64-66)

How does Salva describe the refugee camp? With whom is Salva grouped when he enters the camp? (66-69)

What detail does Salva recognize on the head of a woman at the end of chapter eleven? Why is Salva so interested in this detail? (68-69)

Chapter Twelve:

What does Nya refer to as a "red giraffe?" Why does she refer to it in this manner? (70)

What does Nya think of the work being done in her village? (70-71)

What does Salva realize in his heart when he approaches the woman in the orange headscarf in chapter twelve? (71-72)

How long does Salva live in the camp? Did he expect to? Why/why not? Why does the author decide to skip over this time? (73)

Why does Salva leave the refugee camp? What river does he travel toward? Why? (74-75)

Why does Salva describe the group in the refugee camp as an "enormous herd of panicked, stampeding two-legged creatures"? Why does he use this figurative language? (74-75)

Chapter Thirteen:

What is the irony that Nya describes in chapter thirteen regarding the search for water? (76-77)

What does Nya notice about the person who is the boss of the workers in her village? How does he act in regards to his crew? Why? (76-77)

What does Salva notice as he crouches next to the river? (77-78)

Why does Salva jump into the water? (78)

What happens to Salva when he jumps into the water? (78)

How does Salva make it to the other side of the riverbank? (79)

What method does Salva use to motivate the boys to keep walking? (82)

Reading Five: Chapters 14-15; pages 83-96

Vocabulary:

Borehole (83)

Lost Boys (91)

Processing Center (91)

Threadbare (92)

Lumbered (92)

Aloft (93)

Looping (94)

Braced (95)

Fatigue (95)

Terminal (96)

Chapter Fourteen:

Why is Nya upset when the water finally emerges from the borehole? (83-84)

What is life like for Salva at the Ifo refugee camp? How is it similar and different from the time he spent walking and in the refugee camp at Kakuma? (84-85)

Who is Michael? How does he help Salva? (85-89)

What rumors circulate in the refugee camp? What news does Salva learn? (88-89)

Chapter Fifteen:

Even though there is a new water source near her home, why must Nya still walk to the pond? (90)

Why are Salva and the other boys called “The Lost Boys”? Who calls them that? (91-92)

What is the “one clear moment”(p.91) for Salva amid the processing he must go through in Nairobi? Why does this moment affect him this way?

Describe how Salva’s experiences change from the time boards the plane in Nairobi. (92-95)

What is Salva’s experience of drinking soda like? What does that reveal about him as a character? (93)

What does Salva worry about on the plane to Rochester? (83-94)

Who is in Salva’s new family? What do they bring him? How does he react to the climate in Rochester? (94-96)

Reading Six: Chapters 16-18 (plus Author's Note); pages 97-120

Vocabulary:

Scythes (97)
Relief Agency (100)
Customs (102)
Makeshift (102)
Haze (106)
Guinea Worms (106)
Disputes (113)
Rotary Clubs (117)
Perseverance (117)
Fictionalized (118)
Depicted (118)
Coalition (118)
Autonomy (119)
Factions (119)

Chapter Sixteen:

List some of the differences that Salva notices between America and southern Sudan. How has Salva's life changed? (96-99)

What news does Salva hear from his cousin? Why is it surprising? (100)

Why does it take months to arrange travel plans to Sudan? Why are his memories "so close and so far away at the same time"? (101-102)

Chapter Seventeen:

What is being built near the new well near Nya's home? Who is it for? How does Nya feel about this project? (103-104)

With whom does Salva reunite? How long has it been since they have seen each other? What does Salva learn about his family in Sudan? (104-107)

What does Salva decide to do after he leaves Sudan? Why? (107-110)

Chapter Eighteen:

Where is the Elm Street School? How is the Elm Street School connected to the well in Nya's village? (11-112)

How has Nya's life changed since the well was built? What other "good things" are happening in the village as a result? (112-115)

Why is Nya surprised that the crew leader is Dinka? How do Nya and Salva's story come together in this chapter? (112-115)