

## Study Guide for A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park

### Grades 4 - 8

This is a great story to read to your class as a read-a-loud, or as an independent reading assignment. The following discussion questions will focus on the important parts of this story.

#### Pre-Reading

- Vocabulary; refugee, survive, contaminated, peril
- This *true story* takes place in the African country of Sudan.  
Locate Sudan on a map.
- Predict;
  - How do you think your life might be different from a child living in Sudan?
  - What do you think the title of the story means? (Collect individual predictions and save until the story is finished.)

#### Read the Story

- **The discussion questions are according to chapters.** Each chapter includes two entries made in different years, until the dates meet at the end of the story. Pay attention to Nya's story, as well as the time frame. As the story progresses, ask students to predict the connection between the two entries.

#### Chapter 1

- Compare your daily life to that of Salva. -
- Discuss the civil war that was occurring in Sudan. How did this war impact the daily lives of the people who lived in Sudan?
- Describe the thoughts and feelings Salva must have felt as he ran ... *away* from home.

#### Chapter 2

- What are the uncertainties in Salva's life?
- At the end of this chapter Salva found himself alone. What is he thinking? What is he feeling? What do you predict will happen to Salva?

#### Chapter 3

- How did Salva's circumstances change from good ... to bad ... to good?
- What do you think will happen next?

#### **Chapter 4**

- Why didn't the strangers want to include Salva in their group?
- What was a typical day for Salva when he was with this group?
- What does the term "simple pleasure" mean?
- Why was Salva so happy when they found a beehive? Could this beehive be his simple pleasure?

#### **Chapter 5**

- Describe Salva's new friend, Marial. -
- How would life change for Salva, now that he has a new friend?

#### **Chapter 6**

- How did Salva's life change when he found his uncle?
- What do you think happened to his friend, Marial?

#### **Chapter 7**

- What did happen to Marial?
- Why did this become a nightmare for Salva?
- How did uncle help Salva cope with his fears?
- Tell how Salva's group worked together to build a canoe? Do you think this was a good strategy?

#### **Chapter 8**

- Salva arrived at an island in the Nile River. Which aspects of this day were enjoyable, and which aspects were unbearable?
- How did the travelers prepare for the Akobo desert?
- Predict what conditions will be like in the desert. Do you think Salva is ready?

#### **Chapter 9**

- Describe Salva's trek through the desert.
- How did Salva's uncle help him reach his destination. Do you think this was a good idea? Why?
- Does this chapter make you thirsty? Tell me more!

#### **Chapter 10**

- Describe what was found in the desert.
- Who were the heroes in this chapter? Why?
- Would you give away your water in this situation? Why/why not?
- What happened to uncle? Why did it happen?

### **Chapter 11**

- How did the death of Uncle and Marial give Salva courage and strength?
- Describe the refugee camp in Ethiopia.
- "He (Salva) felt as though he were standing on the edge of a giant hole - a hole filled with the black despair of nothingness." What does this tell you about the feelings of Salva?

### **Chapter 12**

- After 6 years in the refugee camp, the people were being forced out. Put yourself in Salva's shoes. Write how you feel. Share your written expressions.

### **Chapter 13**

- Describe Salva's escape across the river.
- Now Salva is 17 years old. What new responsibilities does he now have? Do think he is prepared for these responsibilities? Why?
- Explain how Salva's thoughts of his family helped him accept his new responsibilities.

### **Chapter 14**

- Describe Salva's life in the Kenya refugee camps.
- What things did Salva learn from Michael? How did this make Salva feel?
- What qualifications did Salva meet, in order to go to America?
- How do you think this opportunity will affect his life?

### **Chapter 15**

- Who are the "lost boys." Why do you think they were called lost?
- What was waiting for Salva in New York?
- Imagine that you are Salva, taking your first footsteps into America. What do you have to say?

### **Chapter 15**

- Who are the "lost boys." Why do you think they were called lost?
- What was waiting for Salva in New York?
- Imagine that you are Salva, taking your first footsteps into America. What do you have to say?

### **Chapter 16**

- How was Salva's American life different from his African life?
- Why did Salva return to Sudan?

## Chapter 17

- What did Salva learn about his family when he met his father?
- Write on a piece of paper what you predict Salva's "project" is. Why do you think the way you do?

## Chapter 18

- Salva's "project" is revealed in this chapter. Are you surprised?
- What is the relationship between Nya and Salva?
- How do Salva's actions impact Nya's future life?

## After Reading:

- Discuss; What does the story title imply? Students can compare their thinking from before the story and now after reading the story of Salva.
- Salva left this personal message;  
*"To young people, I would like to say: Stay calm when things are hard or not going right with you. You will get through it when you persevere instead of quitting. Quitting leads to much less happiness in life than perseverance and hope."*
- With this message in mind, make a list of all the obstacles Salva endured on his life journey. After each obstacle you list, write what you are thinking. What is your reaction?
- Clean water is still a global problem. How does the story of Salva empower you to be a part of the solution?
  - Brainstorm reasons for helping. Answer the questions;  
Why should I care about kids living half a world away?  
Is water a privilege or a human right?
  - Brainstorm ways to raise awareness about the global clean water problem.
  - Brainstorm ways you can raise money to become a part of the solution