

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Jacob Have I Loved

by

### Katherine Paterson

### Book Information

Katherine Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved

Quiz Number: 120

Avon Books, 1981

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175 Pages

Book Level: 5.7

Interest Level: MG

Sibling rivalry divides twin sisters living on an island in Chesapeake Bay.

**Award:** NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts; Newbery Medal

**Topics:** Family Life, Sibling Rivalry; Family Life, Sisters; Natural Environments, Islands; Power Lessons Vocabulary, Grades 7 & Up

### Main Characters

Auntie Braxton an older woman on the island who owns many cats

Captain Hiram Wallace a man who returns to Rass Island to restore his parents home and befriends Call and Louise

Caroline Bradshaw Louise's younger twin, who shines in everything she does

Grandma Truitt's mother, who is cruel to her daughter-in-law and Louise

Joseph Wojtkiewicz Louise's husband in Truitt, Virginia

McCall Purnell (Call) Louise's friend who eventually marries Caroline

Sara Louise Bradshaw (Wheeze) a young girl who is struggling to create her own identity

Susan Bradshaw Louise's mother, who wants a better life for her daughter

Truitt Bradshaw Louise's father, who works with her on his boat

### Vocabulary

**heathen** one who is regarded as irreligious

**paregoric** a medicine containing opium that is used to treat diarrhea

**rankle** to irritate

**skiff** a flat-bottomed boat

**terrapin** a fresh-water turtle

### Synopsis

Sara Louise Bradshaw, known as Louise or "Wheeze," is a teenage girl with a twin sister, Caroline. Everyone on Rass Island gives Caroline special attention because she almost died at birth. Now Caroline seems the perfect child. She is a highly talented musician and is constantly pampered, causing Louise to be jealous.

The girls' father makes a living by pulling up crabs and oysters from Chesapeake Bay. In her spare time Louise earns money by searching for crabs with her friend McCall (Call) Purnell. One day she persuades Call to accompany her to spy on a man who has just come to Rass Island. He turns out to be Captain Wallace, a man who once lived on the island until shame drove him away. She and Call become good friends with the Captain and help him restore his home.

One day Louise returns a tomcat to her Auntie Braxton, but when she arrives at Auntie's home, she finds her unconscious. Captain Wallace and the children help Auntie to the docks where she is then taken to the hospital. Then they clean her home and place all of her many cats with other families. Soon after, the island is pounded by a severe storm and the Captain's home is destroyed. Caroline persuades the Captain to marry Auntie for convenience to ensure him a place to live.

When Auntie dies, the Captain is left with her legacy, which he gives to Caroline for her schooling. Louise is furious because she wants to be the one who leaves. Caroline attends a school in Baltimore and eventually enters the Juilliard School of Music in New York City. While Caroline is in school, Louise decides to work with her father on the boat instead of going to school. Call returns home from the navy to visit, and Louise begins to see him in a new light. When she and Call visit Captain Wallace, she is upset to find out that Call has asked Caroline to marry him. Completely dejected, Louise finally asks her mother why she came to Rass Island. Her mother explains that she thought it would be

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romantic. She agrees that Louise must find her own path.

Louise enrolls in college with plans to become a doctor. When her counselor explains how remote that possibility is, she decides to become a nurse first. She accepts a position in the Appalachian Mountains, in a town called Truitt, which is also her father's name. Louise falls in love with Joseph, a local widower with several children. Louise and Joseph marry and have a son. As the story ends, Louise delivers twins for a local woman. The first twin is healthy but the second twin is born blue and almost lifeless. She warms the second child, and then baptizes it and nurses it before returning to her husband. As she walks home, she sings the song her sister had performed years before.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Initial Understanding

Why do you think Grandma is such a bitter woman?

*Grandma is bitter because she was denied the man she loved. When Captain Wallace returns, her cruelty grows. It is as if the sight of her lost love has opened old wounds that never quite healed. Her resentment becomes more evident by her verbal abuse of her daughter-in-law.*

#### Literary Analysis

Is Louise and Caroline's relationship what you would expect from twins? Why or why not?

*Twins often have a closer relationship than other siblings. They sometimes even have unique ways of communicating with each other. At times, it has been reported that twins have created their own language referred to as "twin speak." However, Louise and Caroline are not close at all. They rarely speak civilly to each other. Louise is very jealous of all the attention that is showered on Caroline. She views Caroline's talents with envy. Throughout the novel, the sisters never actually bridge this gap. Yet, at the end of the novel, Louise seems to understand Caroline better after the birth of the twins.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

Louise and her sister live in different parts of the country at the end of the novel. Based on their relationship, do you think they will see each other again?

*Although the sisters are distant on many levels, there is some hope of reunion at the very end of the novel. Louise seems to make a connection with her sister after her experience with the birth of the twins. She walks home singing the song that Caroline had performed years before. This action, coupled with the action of nursing the second twin, causes the reader to assume that Louise and Caroline will see each other again.*

#### Constructing Meaning

Is Caroline really favored, or is that just Louise's mistaken opinion?

*It truly seems as if Louise's parents dote on Caroline. Often, they ignore Louise when it is obvious that she needs and deserves attention. It is also quite obvious that Grandma dotes on Caroline and treats Louise like she does not belong. She even quotes the Bible verse, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." This tells the reader that her grandmother does not care for her and believes the rest of the family feels the same as she does.*

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## Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** The lifestyle of the Rass Islanders is greatly influenced by their surroundings. Ask your students to research the Chesapeake Bay area. Have them write a short report that pertains to the lifestyles of that region. The report should include such topics as fishing, recreation, agriculture, cuisine, geography, industry, etc.

**Comparing and Contrasting** Louise seems to be a different person by the end of the book. Have your students create a short journal as if they were Louise. Ask them to include any events that may have caused her character to change. Then, ask the students to write a short summary of their findings.

**Recognizing Feelings** Louise often feels alone and abandoned by friends and family. Ask your students to write a poem that describes what loneliness means to them. They could use Louise as a persona, or they could use themselves. Ask volunteers to share their poems with the class. Then, as a group, list some of the common elements that were found in the poems.

**Responding to Literature** Caroline and Louise are two very different people. Ask your students to list several attributes of each character. Then divide your class into groups of two. Have students create a dialogue between Louise and Caroline. Ask volunteers to share their dialogue with the class.