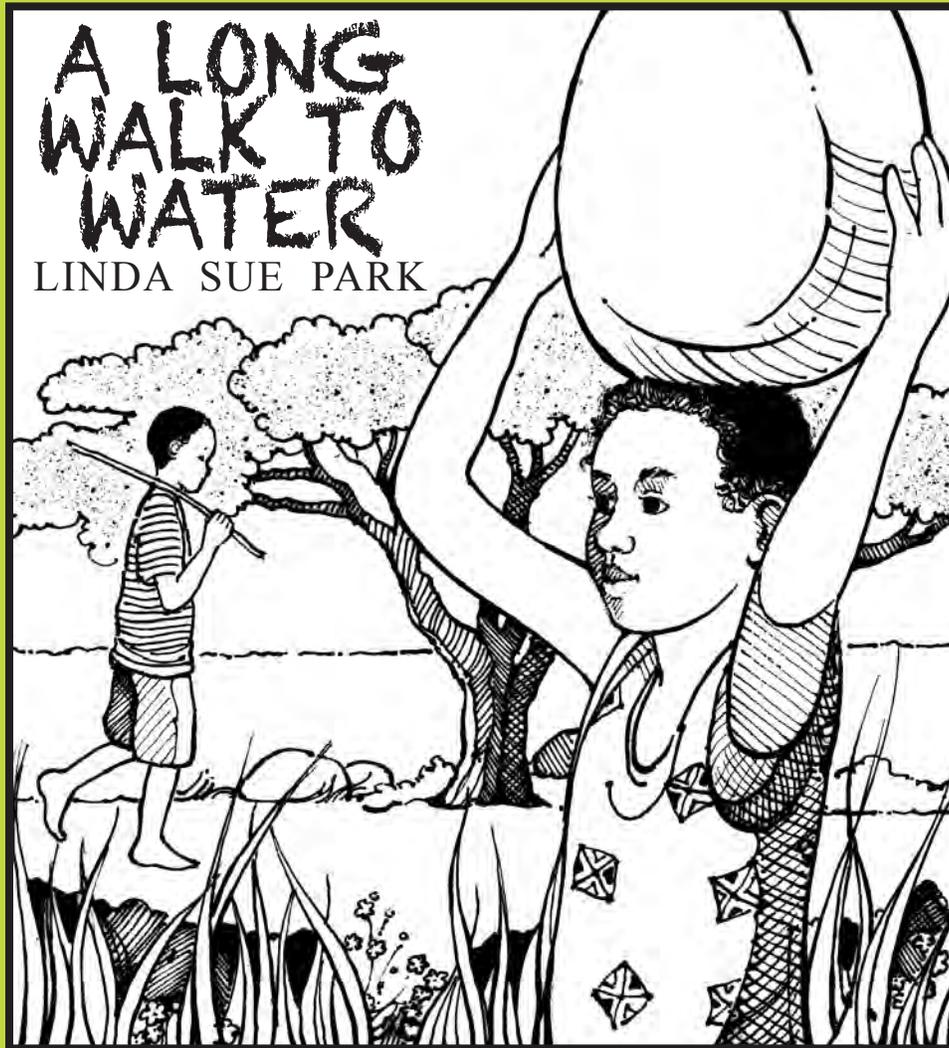


Novel·Ties



A Study Guide

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LEARNING LINKS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Synopsis	1 - 2
Background Information	3
Pre-Reading Activities	4 - 5
Chapter 1	6 - 7
Chapters 2, 3	8 - 10
Chapters 4, 5	11 - 13
Chapters 6 – 8	14 - 15
Chapters 9 – 11	16 - 18
Chapters 12 – 14	19 - 21
Chapters 15 – 17	22 - 24
Chapter 18	25
Cloze Activity	26
Post-Reading Activities	27 - 28
Suggestions For Further Reading	29
Answer Key	30 - 32

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SYNOPSIS

There are two story lines to follow throughout this novel. The first and subsequent shorter episodes, written in italics, follow Nya, whose family is part of the Nuer tribe. She lives in the village of Loun Ariik in South Sudan in the year 2008. She is an eleven-year-old girl who hikes barefoot through thorns and mud, back and forth twice a day to obtain water to bring back to her family. During the rainy season, she travels by foot several times a day to a pond where she can collect water. During the dry season, when there is no water in the pond, Nya's family moves to a camp at a distant lake, where there is some water available.

Returning to her home village, Nya is puzzled to find strangers and villagers clearing land so that a giant drill can excavate for water. Just when it seems as though their efforts are futile, water shoots out from one of the drill holes. This is the first time that Nya has ever had cool, clear water to drink. Nya learns to her delight that children in America raised money to improve life in her village. Nya's father and other men of the village begin clearing more land to build a school that even girls will be able to attend.

The second story line, which takes place in South Sudan and begins in the year 1985, is based on the life of Salva Dut. It follows Salva, as an eleven-year-old boy whose family is part of the Dinka tribe. He feels tremendous fear when bombs explode near his school. Instead of going home, Salva and his classmates are told to hide in the bush.

Salva runs away, joining a wave of villagers who are also escaping rebel soldiers. Unable to find his family among the refugees, Salva joins a group of women who then abandon him during the night. Alone once again, Salva seeks help from an old woman who allows him to sleep in her barn and accepts his help with chores on the farm. After three days, however, the woman decides she will only be safe if she abandons her farm. Unable to take Salva with her, she convinces a group of Dinka men to take Salva with them. It is an arduous walk made worse by lack of food. Marial, a young boy Salva's age, who is also looking for his family, joins the trek and becomes Salva's friend.

Salva is elated when his uncle appears. Having fought in the army, he has a gun and is, therefore, made leader of the group. Although he is wary of lions as he leads the group through the Atuot region, it is believed that Marial was killed by a hungry lion.

A difficult leg of the journey as the group travels east is the long, monotonous crossing of the Nile in boats the refugees construct out of reeds. The next leg of the journey, the Akobo desert, makes the recent Nile crossing seem easy by comparison. The refugees have to endure intense heat and a scarcity of food. Once they arrive at the Itang refugee camp, Salva's uncle tells his nephew that he must get along on his own as he is going to return to the army.

Salva stays at the Itang refugee camp for ten years until it is closed down by the army of the collapsing Ethiopian government. Driven away by gunfire, Salva and others at the camp attempt to cross the crocodile ridden Gilo River as shots are being fired in their direction. Salva is one of the lucky ones to make it across. He becomes the responsible leader of a small group of boys who become part of a large band of refugees who make it to Kenya.

Salva is then chosen to be one of the “Lost Boys” to be adopted by an American family. He is, at first, overwhelmed by his new country, but manages to learn the language and go on to college. One day, six years after he arrived in the United States, Salva receives word from a cousin, telling him that he has seen his father and that he has had surgery.

Salva goes back to South Sudan for a short visit to see his father at the clinic. On his return to the United States, Salva vows to raise money to start projects that will improve the lives of the people in his home village.

The two story lines converge in the last chapter of the book. Nya is waiting on line to fill a bottle of water from the new well, when she meets the leader of the construction crew. Even though she is Neuer and he is Dinka, she feels that she must thank this man, whose name is Salva, for bringing the gift of water to her and her people.

CHAPTER 1

Vocabulary: Draw a line from each word on the left to its meaning on the right. Then use the numbered words to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. panic | a. dare |
| 2. urgent | b. whole |
| 3. entire | c. group of animals that live or are kept together |
| 4. challenge | d. look at something briefly |
| 5. peek | e. people who rise in arms against their government |
| 6. herd | f. sudden, overwhelming fear |
| 7. recall | g. requiring immediate action or attention |
| 8. rebels | h. remember |

.....

1. The farmer put up fencing to keep his _____ of sheep from wandering away.
2. I called an ambulance when it became clear that the cut on my arm required _____ care.
3. The _____ tried to kidnap young boys to fight in their war against the existing government.
4. When they smelled smoke and did not see a way to escape, _____ overcame the people in the movie audience.
5. After practicing and taking lessons, I am ready to _____ my older brother to a game of tennis.
6. I was so hungry that I ate my _____ hamburger before the ketchup arrived.
7. If I try very hard, I can _____ everything that happened on my first day of kindergarten.
8. When a movie becomes very scary, I _____ at the screen through my fingers in order to feel safe.

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Read the message from Salva Dut that follows Chapter Eighteen. Find out why this young man from Africa was able to survive war in his own land and achieve success in America. Do some research to find out more about Salva Dut's grass roots projects in South Sudan.
2. Read the Author's Note that follows the message from Salva Dut at the end of the book. Find out why Sudan was at war, who were the many factions in conflict, and what natural resource has both benefited and almost destroyed South Sudan.
3. Return to the hand-drawn map at the beginning of the book. Trace the part of Salva's journey that took place in Africa. Notice the scale of miles that appears in the lower left-hand corner of the map. Try to determine how many miles Salva traveled always on foot.
4. Go online and Google Linda Sue Parks' interview with Salva Dut. Learn about the work that Salva has been doing in South Sudan. Find out about the wells that his foundation has drilled in many villages. Also, learn how the wells have changed people's lives in dramatic ways.
5. In 2003, Salva Dut founded a not-for-profit organization that is named *Water for South Sudan*, or WFSS. In the years since its founding, ninety-two schools from thirty-seven states have supported Salva's mission by fundraising in the United States. WFSS is now in need of a new drilling rig. If you wish to start a fundraiser in your school or community, you might want to contact: Water for South Sudan, P.O. Box 2551, Rochester, New York 14625.
6. **Vocabulary Review:** Choose ten challenging words from any of the vocabulary exercises in the chapter units of this study guide. Write about *A Long Walk to Water* in a paragraph or in ten individual sentences, using the vocabulary words you chose.
7. Imagine that *A Long Walk to Water* is being made into a film. Who might play the roles of Salva and Nya. What scenes might be added, changed, or omitted? What music would you suggest as background for the film? In what ways might the book be better than the film? In what ways might the film be better than the book?