

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Betsy-Tacy

by

### Maud Hart Lovelace

### Book Information

Maud Hart Lovelace, Betsy-Tacy  
Quiz Number: 7  
HarperTrophy, 2000  
ISBN 0-06-440096-4; LCCN  
113 Pages  
Book Level: 4.0  
Interest Level: MG

Two young girls become inseparable friends.

**Topics:** Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship;  
READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback  
Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades  
4-6; Series, Betsy-Tacy

### Main Characters

Anna Anastacia Kelly (Tacy) the shy little girl who becomes good friends with Betsy

Beatrice Kelly (Bee) Tacy's baby sister, who dies of an illness at Easter

Betsy Ray the imaginative, outgoing little girl who becomes a close friend of Tacy

George Kelly Tacy's older brother, who works near a tailor

Julia Ray Betsy's older sister, who sometimes regards Betsy as an annoyance

Katie Kelly Tacy's older sister, who accompanies Tacy to new places and explains that Tacy is bashful

Margaret Ray Betsy and Julia's new baby sister

Miss Dalton Betsy and Tacy's teacher, who tries to make Tacy's first day easier

Mr. Baumgarten the tailor who gives his fashion magazines to Betsy and Tacy

Mr. Robert Ray Betsy's father, who gives the girls rides in his buggy

Mrs. Benson a friendly neighbor who often gives Tacy and Betsy things for their games

Mrs. Chubbock the kindly woman who runs the candy store and comforts Tacy and Betsy when they run away from school

Mrs. Kelly Tacy's mother, who refuses to scold her children

Mrs. Ray Betsy's lively red-haired mother, who encourages Betsy to make friends with Tacy

Thelma Muller (Tib) a wealthy little girl who becomes friends with Betsy and Tacy when she moves to their neighborhood from Milwaukee

Tom a boy about the same age as Betsy and Tacy who sometimes plays with them

### Vocabulary

**acquainted** familiar with or knowledgeable about

**cambric tea** a small amount of tea mixed with a lot of milk and sugar

**forlorn** sad and lonely

**mason** a person who lays brick or stone

**parlor** a room in a house used mainly for visiting with guests

**surrey** a horse-drawn carriage with four wheels and two sets of seats

### Synopsis

*Betsy-Tacy* is the story of the early friendship of Betsy Ray and Anna Anastacia "Tacy" Kelly. The story opens with a flashback of the girls' first meeting. When Betsy first attempts to talk with Tacy and asks her name, shy Tacy runs into her home and belatedly shouts "Tacy" from the safety of her porch. Because Betsy does not recognize "Tacy" as a name, she assumes the girl is calling her names. Betsy later learns that Tacy is the girl's nickname from Betsy's older sister Julia, who has become friends with Tacy's sister Katie. Betsy and Tacy become close friends at Betsy's fifth birthday party.

The girls often dine together on a bench on the nearby hill. Betsy entertains Tacy with imaginative stories, such as how the girls can fly on a feather. They enjoy playing in an old piano box playhouse and dream of climbing the Big Hill.

At school, the girls' teacher, Miss Dalton, thinks that Tacy will feel more comfortable if she sits next to the teacher's desk. Miserable because she is separated from Betsy, Tacy runs away during recess. Betsy follows her sobbing friend; the girls stop in front of Mrs. Chubbock's store. Even Betsy is crying now

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Betsy-Tacy

by

### Maud Hart Lovelace

because she is worried about leaving school without permission. Mrs. Chubbock gives the girls chocolate to comfort them; Miss Dalton arrives and offers to let Tacy share a seat with Betsy in the classroom. The girls are happy to return to school.

Betsy's imagination takes the girls on adventures in a magic milk wagon and with their treasured paper dolls. When Tacy's baby sister Bee dies at Easter, Betsy consoles Tacy with a story about Bee in Heaven getting news from the birds. The girls decide to put Tacy's prettiest Easter egg in the robin's nest for the bird to take to Bee.

In the spring Betsy's father adds a room to the house for the new baby the family anticipates. Betsy and Tacy use leftover Easter egg dye to color sand, which they put in bottles to sell. Mrs. Benson, a neighbor, gives the girls each a nickel when they sell her two sand bottles. Although the girls believe that the nickels provide them with enough money to buy a chocolate-colored house on Pleasant Street that they admire, Tacy's older brother George gently informs them that they do not have quite enough money. He softens their disappointment by reminding the girls that the weather is probably warm enough for them to have a picnic on their bench.

Betsy and Tacy play dress-up with borrowed finery from Betsy's mother and Tacy's older sister. They visit Mrs. Benson, who treats them to cambric tea and cookies. Betsy wishes to leave a visiting card at the chocolate-colored house, but she finds out that the new residents of the house are still in Milwaukee. She places the visiting card in the mailbox. The girls are fascinated with the sound of the word "Milwaukee" and fantasize about driving the surrey in Betsy's shed to Milwaukee. When their classmate Tom joins them, they change their fantasy destination to St. Paul, since Tom has visited St. Paul and the girls do not wish to share their Milwaukee fantasy with Tom.

Betsy and Julia visit Uncle Edward's farm that summer and return to meet their new baby sister. Julia is pleased, but Betsy resents the baby even

though the girls' father says the girls may name the baby. When Julia and Betsy cannot agree on a name for the baby, their father suggests "Margaret" and the girls agree.

Shortly after Margaret's birth, Betsy and Tacy climb the Big Hill. When they return, Betsy's mother explains that Mrs. Muller and her daughter Tib have just moved into the chocolate-colored house and have paid a visit in response to Betsy's visiting card. She encourages Betsy and Tacy to get acquainted with Tib, who is just about their age. Tib welcomes the girls and encourages Betsy to share one of her "hill" stories. The three girls walk hand-in-hand toward the bench on the hill, planning wonderful adventures the threesome can share.

## Open-Ended Questions

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

### Initial Understanding

How does Betsy feel about Julia?

*Betsy thinks Julia is too bossy and acts like she is smarter than Betsy. Several times Betsy is annoyed with Julia. For example, Betsy is upset when Julia scoffs at Betsy's proud announcement that she climbed part of the way up the Big Hill. She also becomes angry when she thinks Julia is pandering to her parents by pretending to like the new baby. Furthermore, Betsy is frustrated with Julia when Julia wants to name the baby Ginivra instead of Rosy. Sometimes, however, Betsy appreciates Julia's wider range of experience, such as when Julia escorts Betsy to school on the first day and explains things as they walk along.*

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Betsy-Tacy

by

### Maud Hart Lovelace

---

#### Literary Analysis

Why does this book describe so many journeys, both real and imaginary?

*The journeys help the reader to understand Betsy's personality. Betsy is a very adventurous girl who has romantic dreams about journeys to faraway places. The author shows this by describing Betsy's "travels," such as the trip on the feather, the journey to Milwaukee, and the ride in the milkman's wagon. Betsy's love of adventure is also shown by the trips she and Tacy take up the Big Hill. Additionally, Betsy's trips explore the nature of the relationship she has with Tacy. In most cases, Betsy leads Tacy on fantastic journeys, just as she gradually leads Tacy in almost every aspect of their relationship. In fact, Betsy assumes leadership so habitually that she is actually surprised that Tacy offers her guidance when Betsy is upset about having a new baby sister.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

What is the most likely reason that Mrs. Ray sends the girls to the Muller house after she scolds them for leaving her card there?

*Although Mrs. Ray scolds Betsy for leaving her calling card at a stranger's house, she is also amused. She feels that Betsy's mistake has turned out for the best, since Mrs. Muller is a stranger in town who is happy to have an opportunity to make friends. Mrs. Ray enjoys the company of Mrs. Muller and thinks that Tib is entertaining and pleasant. She wants to encourage the girls to start a relationship with Tib probably because she knows Tib is lonely and needs friends, but also because she wants to reinforce the relationship she has begun with Mrs. Muller.*

#### Constructing Meaning

How do you feel about Betsy's reaction to having a new baby sister?

*Answers will vary. Some students will be shocked that Betsy thinks her little sister is ugly and unnecessary. Some students will be amused by Betsy's feelings and her disgust at Julia's fawning over the baby. Some may feel sympathy for Betsy because she is having such a hard time adjusting to the idea that she is no longer the baby of the family.*

### Teachable Skills

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** This book gives many clues about the general time period and region of the book. Have the students list these clues and then try to estimate when and where this story takes place.

**Comparing and Contrasting** This book tells the story of two girls who form a close friendship. Have the students read another story describing a friendship, such as *A Taste of Blackberries*. Then have the students compare how the relationships described in these stories are similar and how they are different.

**Responding to Literature** Betsy's mother gives Betsy and Tacy the piano box because she believes everyone should have private space. Betsy and Tacy decorate the space according to their own tastes. Have the students consider what kind of private space they would like and how they would decorate it. Then have them create models of their special places.

**Recognizing Cause and Effect** This book is a collection of anecdotes. Some incidents affect future events in the story. Have the students identify at least three sets of events that are interrelated in this text. Have them explain the relationship between the events they list.