

Violet Raines *Almost Got Struck by Lightning* by Danette Haworth

Reading Group Guide

1. Bridges are frequently used as a metaphor in literature. Another famous one in children's literature is *The Bridge to Terabithia*. The bridge that Eddie dares Violet to cross could be a metaphor for the bridge between childhood and adolescence. As in life, crossing from one thing to another is scary, and there are dangers along the way. In the case of the bridge:

“Most of the netting has fallen off. The wires look thin. And there are gaps big enough for a person to fall through” (p.31).

As if that weren't enough, the bridge is suspended over water filled with giant alligators. If you were Violet, would you dare to cross it? Why or why not?

2. Clearly, Violet lags behind Melissa and Lottie as far as transitioning from childhood to adolescence is concerned. Melissa and Lottie have become interested in makeup, bras, and soap operas, and Melissa draws a gender line with Eddie in a way that has never occurred to Violet. She'd really rather go out and collect Brain Freeze cups with Eddie than watch soap operas or do makeovers with Lottie and Melissa. When her good friend Eddie makes a bra joke: “You got everything she

does . . . except the bra” (p. 34), it infuriates Violet. Why does she get so mad at him?

3. On the same note, why is Melissa able to make Violet so crazy with her innuendos about her alleged crush on Eddie (like when she starts singing “K-I-S-S-I-N-G . . .” when Violet and Eddie are in the tree cave? (p. 68).

4. Violet is very close to nature—how does she use nature to retaliate against Melissa?

5. Lightning plays such an important role in the book that it is almost a character on its own. Living in “Lightning Alley,” the characters in the book have great respect for lightning. Here's a description from Violet:

“Then the air whooshes up like there's a big vacuum in the sky. I glance at Eddie, whose eyes look as big as mine feel, then static rushes over me, prickling my hair, and my heart jumps but before I can open my mouth, a single bolt strikes and flares over the woods across the street and at the same time BOOM! Like an earthquake.” (p. 44).

Have you ever been that close to lightning? If so, was your experience similar to Violet's? How? Just in case you're ever that close to lightning, you might want to read these tips on lightning safety from the national weather service now: www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov

6. As the book progresses, Violet feels that change is in the air. What do you think Violet is referring to when she says: “The air around us is charged with electricity. I wait. Something big is going to happen, I just know it” (p. 44).

7. When Melissa’s mother first meets Violet, she says, “Well, you’re certainly not a shrinking Violet, are you?” (p. 19) The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a shrinking violet as a “bashful or retiring person.” Indeed, Violet isn’t. What are some of the ways that Violet demonstrates bravery? What is she afraid of?

8. After Lottie and Melissa give Violet a makeover, she thinks she looks like a movie star. But when she bumps into Eddie and “hits him with the full power of [her] beauty” (p. 118), he looks like he’s about to throw up. What sparks such a drastic reaction from Eddie when he sees her?

9. Melissa dares Violet to kiss Eddie. Fed up, and not wanting to give Melissa the advantage, Violet takes the dare. Why is Eddie so upset afterward when Violet jubilantly calls out, “I did it—I kissed him! It was nothing” (p. 143)?

10. Violet thinks Melissa’s collection of autographed celebrity photos is quite silly. But when Lottie’s parents find out they won’t get any insurance money, those letters inspire Violet to write a letter to the local newspaper, asking for help for her best friend. How does Violet’s letter

lead to a peace treaty between Violet and Melissa?

11. When Violet finally forces herself to attempt to cross the scary bridge to apologize to Eddie, and he helps her back to land, she suddenly sees him in a new light (p. 156–157). Why? What do you think has changed?

12. It’s pretty obvious that Violet is not too fond of Melissa. Throughout the novel, we get a good sense of how Violet sees her. But if you were to flip the coin, how do you think Melissa sees Violet?