

JourneyForth Study Guide

This study guide is designed to help you think analytically about the content of the book. The questions that follow are open-ended, allowing you to discuss various topics and issues addressed in the novel. They cover four broad categories: character, plot, setting, and theme.

The Foundling

by Linda Hayner

a JourneyForth book © 1997 BJU Press

Introduction

In 1625 Charles I became king of England. He believed that kings received their right to rule directly from God. "I owe the account of my actions to God alone," Charles said in June of 1628. Many members of Parliament disagreed.

Charles had huge debts from unsuccessful wars against Spain and failed attempts to help the Huguenots in France. Add the lavish gifts the king gave to his favorite, the Duke of Buckingham, and it is not hard to understand that Parliament wanted more control over the king and how he spent his money.

In 1629, the House of Commons, the lower house of England's Parliament, presented to Charles a *Petition of Right*. In the petition were listed the rights of all Englishmen and how they limited the king. Charles retaliated by sending Parliament home and ruling England alone for eleven years. He levied medieval fees and taxes that hadn't been collected for centuries. With careful budgeting, Charles's government continued to function.

In 1639 William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, convinced Charles that the Scots should leave their Presbyterian Church and join the Anglican Church. The Scots refused. Charles sent two armies to Scotland, one in 1639 and one in 1640. Neither army convinced the Scots to join the Anglican Church, but Charles was left with two armies to pay. His budget was ruined. He had to call Parliament and convince the members to vote some new taxes for him.

Parliament had been waiting for such an opportunity. When the Lords and Commons met in 1640, they had a long list of grievances. If Charles ignored the list, he would not receive any taxes. "No supply [taxes] without redress of [dealing with] grievances," they told him. Charles signed many Acts drawn up by Parliament to limit his power. He hoped in return to receive the taxes he needed, but Parliament was stingy.

By 1642, Charles had endured enough. He decided to arrest his enemies in the House of Commons. Charles and his soldiers burst into the Commons chamber, something which no king had ever done. Although, as Charles said "all the birds are flown," and there were no arrests, this marked the beginning of the English Civil Wars (1642-1646, 1648). These wars are the background for Will's adventures.

Charles lost the wars and was arrested by the Parliamentary army. A court of commissioners tried and found the king guilty of being a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy of the people of England. Charles I was beheaded January 30, 1649.

Concerning character

1. “He [Will] dismissed the beggars that moved with the traffic. They were always about, always a nuisance. He wondered why they didn’t work so they wouldn’t have to beg” (p. 135). What irony do you see in Will’s thoughts?
2. Note Marie’s behavior toward Will on page 157. Why do you think she acts like a nervous “thundercloud about to brandish some lightning bolts”?
3. From her recounting of Gillian’s engagement party (pp. 184–86), Marie seems to have been severely mistreated or overlooked. What does her attitude toward the memory say about her as a person?
4. Reading “makes people think they’re better than others; high-minded” (p. 208). What does Mr. Falconer’s statement reveal about him? Do you think the maxim “knowledge is power” is true? Why?
5. Page 213—especially paragraphs one through six—gives us a glimpse of Mr. Fortescue’s views on education and learning. For example he says to Will, “If you’re going to do the best work . . . you must know more than just your special area.” In what ways does this contrast with Mr. Falconer’s ideas on education?
6. Will is a *dynamic character*—he doesn’t stay the same throughout the story. For instance, when Mistress Bessie dies, he realizes he must grow up: he must not cry anymore and must go to the Vicar’s to earn his own way in life (p. 122). How else does he grow? Who are some other dynamic characters in the book? In what ways do they change?
7. *Static characters* are the opposite of dynamic characters—they don’t change. One example would be the Vicar. He has many opportunities to be kind to Will: to give Will a better room to sleep in, to feed him properly, to offer him the money Rodgers sent (instead of hoarding it). But the Vicar never changes; he is consistently mean-spirited and greedy. List some other static characters and show places where they have the opportunity to grow, but instead remain the same.

Concerning plot

8. Briefly trace the major plot points of *The Foundling*. Here’s a start:

Will’s mother leaves him at the church door. Constable Crumpton then takes him to Master Perry. Master Perry arranges for Will to live with Mistress Bessie.

9. In chapter one, part one, Willy’s mother left him at the church door. Did she do the best thing for him? Why?
10. On pages 207–212 we get a glimpse into the lives of Will’s friends. Compare Will’s apprenticeship with his friends’. Is Will’s better than theirs or worse? Why?

11. We read that Sam’s master mistreats him (pp. 208–210). Mr. Falconer refuses him an education, takes all his best clothes, starves him, and beats him. In the book what are some suggestions Will and his friends give Sam for handling this problem? Compare their advice with Ephesians 6:5–6.
12. A climax is the moment of highest tension or emotion in a story. After having read the book, what do you think is the climax of *The Foundling*?

Concerning setting and historical context

13. Will’s story is like that of many foundlings. What do you think a foundling is? Compare the seventeenth-century foundling to children in the twenty-first century. Are there still foundlings today? What happens to them now—both good and bad?
14. Why do you think parishes in seventeenth-century England helped poor boys and girls to find apprenticeships (beyond the fact that it was part of the English Poor Law)?
15. Many issues of seventeenth-century England are addressed in *The Foundling*. Below is a list of five of them. For each one, provide examples of how the issue was dealt with in the book and how it is relevant today.
 - a. Poverty and homelessness
 - b. God’s fairness in letting good people die
 - c. Class struggles (poor people’s right to succeed vs. “the likes of you has only what he’s allowed to have”)
 - d. Love of learning versus willful ignorance
 - e. Family includes relatives, but other people as well
16. On page 263, Will plans to help Sam escape, even if it means breaking the law. But seventeenth century English common law said that an apprentice must fulfill his time of indenture; otherwise he was liable to be thrown into prison for breaking his contract. On the other hand, by law the master of an apprentice was to provide for him and treat him as part of his own family (giving him a room in the master’s house and feeding him at the family table). Can you think of any alternatives to Will’s plan that *would* be ethical?

Concerning tone and theme

17. A theme is an idea, concept, or message that is reinforced through the overall work. What do you think is the main theme of the book?
18. Master Perry comes to an understanding on page 49: Willy and his mother’s “lives had been reduced to the value of a bit of ribbon in a rubbish heap.” To what is Mater Perry referring? Why is or isn’t his statement accurate?

19. “I’ve had [it] for so long, it’s really mine anyway” (pp. 182–183). Is Marie’s comment about the brooch ethical? Is it true? Does her taking it—just a small thing—qualify her “as a thief”? Does Marie deserve to keep Mistress Perry’s ring and chain—after all the work she has done for the Perrys for so many years? What Bible verses can you think of that refute Marie’s view of her thievery?
20. Note the last paragraph on page 329. If you were Master Perry, what might you plan to do to help poor Sam?