



The Later Life Of Beautiful Joe

A DISCUSSION GUIDE

Beautiful Joe continues the story of his life. He moves with Miss Laura to a farm in the country. He learns all about horses, chickens, cows, and sheep. Tragedies strike for several humans and animals. He attends the wedding of his beloved owner. And he reminisces about his fortunate life.

❶ FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Let's talk about the watercolor painting on the cover. Does it give you ideas about what might happen in the story? Why do you think it is a watercolor painting and not a photograph?

❷ SETTING

The *temporal setting* for this book is the 1890s. Life in this era was different than it is today. Find examples in the text that show these differences in technology, social customs, and patterns of speech.

❸ KIDS IN THE COUNTRY

Every other year, the Morris family dispersed for part of the summer. Children were hosted by relatives in far-away places. Do you think this is normal? Why might it be a good thing for kids?

❹ A KIND PERSON

Young Mr. Maxwell said that he loved all animals but he liked only a few people. Why do you think he felt that way? He needed crutches to walk. How do you think this affected his views about daily life for humans and for animals?

❺ HARSH REALITIES

In the story, a cruel person left animals to starve to death. Why do you think some people can be so cruel? Research and report on local laws and punishments for animal neglect.

❻ BANDS OF MERCY

They really did exist. Investigate and report on: Where did they start? How many were there? What did they do? What was their relationship to the SPCA? Why did their popularity fade?

❼ AN UNUSUAL CHARACTER

The dog Dandy was self-centered and indifferent to others. Do you think this was due to nature or nurture? Why do you think Miss Laura would be so kind to a dog that was not considerate to her?

❽ A HIGH-PITCHED WHINE

Just after the wedding, Joe made his high-pitched whine of joylove and also expressed a hope. How might that hope *foreshadow* something later in his story? [hint: later = near end of third book]

❾ FACT IN FICTION

This story is based on Margaret Saunder's (1861–1947) novel *Beautiful Joe* in 1893. In that novel, she summed up Miss Laura's married life in a single sentence: "She married Mr. Harry four years ago." Investigate and discuss why she did not—or could not—write in more detail about Miss Laura's personal life. [possible influences: Margaret Saunders was a Victorian-era woman who never married. In 1889, her younger sister Laura died at the age of 17 after months of terrible suffering.]