



CALLIE LIVES WITH HER SIX BROTHERS AND ENDURES THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A GIRL IN 1899. HER ONLY SALVATION IS HER GRANDFATHER WHO ENCOURAGES HER LOVE OF SCIENCE.



Jacqueline Kelly was born in New Zealand and moved with her parents to western Canada at an early age. She grew up in the dense rain forests of Vancouver Island, so you can imagine her shock some years later when her family moved to the desert of El Paso, Texas. She attended university in El Paso and medical school in Galveston (lovingly known as “Galvatraz” among the inmates). She practiced medicine for many years and then attended the University of Texas School of Law. She practiced law for several more years before realizing that what would really make her happy is to write fiction. Her first published short story appeared in 2001 in the Mississippi Review (one of her proudest accomplishments). Her debut novel, THE EVOLUTION OF CALPURNIA TATE, was released by Henry Holt on May 12, 2009 (another one of her proudest accomplishments).



THE EVOLUTION OF CALPURNIA TATE BY JACQUELINE KELLY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DEVELOPED BY FRIENDS OVER BOOKS VOLUNTEERS

1. Calpurnia Tate takes place in Texas in 1899. How has American life changed since then - the role of women, telephone/computer technology, kitchen life, transportation? What technologies have become outdated? What new cutting edge technologies and social norms are on the horizon for Americans in 2011? How might they change your life? (I-phones, Face Book etc.)

2. Every name has a history. What was the history behind the name of "Calpurnia"? (p. 26-27) Do you know the origin of your name? Do you know famous people that have (had) your name?

3. What does it mean to be eccentric? Are there any eccentric people like Callie's grandfather in your file? Describe them. What do they add to your life?

4. Do you have a relative or older person in your life who loves what you love? Who spends time with you in a way that is personally meaningful to you? Describe that person and why he is so special to you.

5. Have you ever felt about a brother or sister the way Callie feels about Harry? Travis? Did her feelings towards her brothers sound familiar? Describe.

6. What does it mean to be a scientist in this book? Some of the quotations to discuss that describe the way a scientist approaches his work)

~ "Where I saw nothing but leaf mold and dried twigs, he saw camouflaged beetles, motionless lizards, invisible spiders." (Careful Observation)

~ Calpurnia's Morning List (p.34)
(Records/Keeps a Journal)

~ 'I peered at it. Land? Sea? Or air? Although there were many limbs, they look rubbery, and not substantial enough to bear my weight, so it had to be a swimmer. Sea, then. Except that there were not fins. How could it swim with no fins? And I couldn't see any gills. Another problem. The eyes were oversized saucers. Why would they need to be so big? Answer: to see in the dark, of course. It had to live in areas of low light, which meant deep water.' (Asks Questions)



~ Plato said, "All science begins with astonishment." The transformation of Petey from a caterpillar into a moth "a citizen of air." (Awe, rapture, wonder – the initial feelings that launch the desire to understand and discover).

~ What other activities in the book make you understand the role of a scientist in a new way?

7. What personality traits does Calpurnia possess that will make her a good scientist? For instance, strength of purpose (Her sign: Experiment in process. Do not mess with this plant. I mean it!); ability to record (p34) sensitivity to nature ("the white lilies that glowed in the dark like pale miniature stars fallen to earth"); perseverance (searching for the vetch, even to the point of hurting her leg in the badger hole).

8. Do you feel that Callie's mother is unfair to her? Do you think she wants her to be someone that she isn't". Have you ever felt like that? Discuss.

9. Have you ever received a gift (like the Science of Housewifery) that totally devastated you because it was so removed from who you are? What was the best gift you ever received? What was the best gift you gave another person – that related to him personally?

10. Have you ever felt the horror that Callie Vee felt when she realized she hadn't marked down the location of the specimen on the jar? Why did she feel so horrible? When did you feel like that? Why? What did you do to feel better?

11. Do you think that Callie Vee will be strong enough to buck the tide of her family's expectations and become a scientist? Do you think that you will be strong enough to realize your dreams in your own life? What small steps can you take towards realizing those dreams today (keeping a journal if you want to be a scientist, etc.)

12. Did this book make you want to become a scientist? Did it help make you more sensitive to the natural world?

