



Appleseeds: A Boy Named Johnny Chapman
Questions for Discussion or Writing

Pre-reading:

What do you already know or think you know about Johnny Appleseed?

Have you ever wondered what Longmeadow looked like 100 or 200 years ago? What do you imagine it may have looked like? What might be the same and what might be different?

Chapter 1: A Delivery

Johnny has two important jobs on Monday. What were they? Do you have any jobs in your family?

The book begins in the springtime and Johnny notices lots of changes in the world around him. What are some of the changes he notices? What season is it outside in your community right now? What are some of the sights, sounds and smells of that season?

Describe Johnny's relationship with his little brother Nathaniel. How do you think they feel about each other and what makes you think that?

Colonel Hale mentions one of Johnny's least favorite words: school. Can you make any guesses as to why he might not like school. How does that word make you feel? Why?

Chapter 2: *Captain Chapman's Orders*

Throughout the book, Johnny's father is called "Captain Chapman." What war did he serve in to get that title? What do you know about that period in American history?

In Chapter Two, we find out why the word "school" fills Johnny with worry. What happened to him last term? How does that make you feel?

What does it mean to be smart about things that "just don't seem to matter at school?" Do you have any natural skills or strengths that you don't get to show at school? What are they?

The narrator in *Appleseeds: A Boy Named Johnny Chapman* is someone outside the story - someone who knows everything that has happened and how a character thinks or feels. This is called a 3rd-person narrator. How might the story of Johnny's troubles during winter term have been told differently if Captain Chapman told it? If Johnny told it? If Master Loomis told it?

Chapter 3: *The Town Green*

Here in Longmeadow, we still have the town green. Have you ever stopped to really look around the green? How would you describe it to someone who has never been here? Johnny walks to the green from his house that was on Bliss Road. How do you get to the green?

Are there any landmarks mentioned in this chapter that you recognize today? What are they?

Look at the map at the beginning of the book and trace Johnny's journey from his house to Colonel Hale's store. Can you draw a map from your house to the green and Center School today? Would it look similar?

The narrator mentions that the green was always a busy place where "men in waistcoats and breeches talked about important matters. And ladies in long apron-covered dresses with kerchiefs tied around their necks carried baskets to and from neighborly visits also talking about important matters." Do you think the men

and the women talked about the same “important matters”? How might their conversations been the same or different based on if they were a man or a woman? Has that changed at all since 1783? In what ways?

We hear that Johnny does not like to wear shoes because they “pinched his toes and made his feet feel all stuffy.” Has this feeling ever happened to you in shoes? Are you allowed to walk around outside barefoot? What would you recommend to him?

Chapter 4: *Meeting Nicholas*

Nicholas and Johnny will become good friends, but they don’t know it yet. Do you remember the day you met a good friend of yours? Describe it in as much detail as you can remember. Where was it? How did you come together? What were you wearing, eating, listening to, or doing? Did you know that it was the beginning of a new friendship? Why or why not?

Nicholas tells Johnny that he and Phillis used to be “enslaved” by Reverend Williams. What do you know about slavery in America? What do you think that meant for Nicholas and Phillis?

Nicholas and Johnny have different feelings about reading. Who do you relate to more and why?

Do you have a friend who has a skill that you wish you had? What is it? Would you ever ask them to teach you? Why or why not?

Chapter 5: *Meeting Eda (and Hitty)*

Editha Keep, or Eda as she likes to be called, is quite a character. What words would you use to describe her? Have you ever known someone like Eda? How did you feel about them?

Eda gives us some more details about Master Simeon Loomis, the school teacher for last winter’s term. How do you think you would have done in his class? What makes you say that?

Notice the (parentheses) around Hitty’s name in the chapter title. Why do you think the author chose to do this?

Chapter 6: *Trouble in the Orchard*

In this chapter, Nicholas and Johnny spend time together helping Johnny learn how to read. What are some of the steps Nicholas uses? What do you think of this method? What do you remember about learning how to read?

In these days before the school term starts, Johnny and his friends have some free time everyday to be together. Do you notice anything similar to how you play with your friends today with how they played together in 1783?

Have you ever been to an apple orchard before? What are some of the sights, sounds, textures, and fragrances of an orchard?

Hitty is stung by bees! What does her mother do to make her feel better? Have you ever been stung by a bee before? What sort of treatment did you receive?

Chapter 7: *Putting Pen to Paper*

Nicholas is once again tutoring Johnny - this time in writing. What makes Nicholas a good teacher for Johnny?

Phillis says that she had everything she needed to make a home anywhere: Nicholas, her sewing supplies, her bedsheets, and her book (Bible). Is that enough to make a home? What four things would you need to make a home anywhere?

Chapter 8: *Nathaniel's Jam*

Johnny is left in charge of his younger brother and loses track of him. Have you ever had something similar happen - either with you being in charge or you being the one to get lost or sneak away?

In Johnny's lifetime, some foods were only available at certain times of year - like strawberries! What are some of your favorite foods that are best during summer? Are there any other foods you can think of that are only available at certain times of year? How has modern technology changed our access to a bigger variety of foods all year long?

Chapter 9: *The School Teacher*

A long time ago it was common for school teachers to move in with a student's family during the school term. Eda is so excited at the idea that Nicholas gets to live with the teacher and have breakfast and dinner with her everyday. Would this be interesting to you? Why or why not?

What impression do you have of Miss Polly Reynolds? Can you make any predictions about what kind of teacher she will be? Why?

In 1783 school was available to children ages 4-14, but not mandatory. For example, Nicholas did not have to attend if he didn't want to. If you had the choice, do you think you would attend school? Did Nicholas make a good choice?

Chapter 10: *First Day*

How does Johnny feel about the first day of school? What details let you know that?

What are some similarities and differences between Johnny's school and yours? What do you think he would think of your classroom?

Chapter 11: *School Days*

How is summer term at school different for Johnny than winter term?

Early in the book, the narrator said that Johnny was a friend to all animals. What is one way you see that in this chapter?

Margaret Pratt plays a mean trick on Hitty. Different people on the play yard react differently. Think about if something like that happened in your class. Who do you think you'd respond like? Eda? Johnny? Nicholas? Someone else? Explain.

What do you think of Miss Reynolds' punishment? Would you have done something else?

Chapter 12: *Lightning Strikes*

Summer weather can be both wonderful and terrible! What are some words you can use to describe the weather in this chapter? How do you feel about summer weather?

Cooley Brook is a real brook in Longmeadow and can be found at Laurel Park. Johnny and Mother Lucy talk about where the brook starts and where it goes and taking time to explore while you are young. What do you think of Mother Lucy's advice? How does this conversation hint at Johnny's future as an adult?

What do we learn about community through the scene of the Williams' house fire? Do you think that sense of community still exists today?

Chapter 13: *Incorporation Day*

Miss Reynolds gives the students of the brick schoolhouse on the green a lesson in the Native American origin of certain place names in their community. What were the names and what did they mean? Practice saying them out loud. Research and list a few other place names in our area or elsewhere in America that have Native American origins.

The writer states, "Incorporation Day dawned with rosy ribbons of pinks, violet, and orange light from the east." Have you ever noticed the colors of early morning? How do the colors of the sky change throughout the day? What sounds do you associate with morning?

Johnny has a lot to be proud of himself for. What advice should he give to the Johnny that was scared of school in Chapter 1?

Chapter 14: *School's Out*

What secret does Miss Reynolds reveal to Johnny and Nicholas? Does this secret surprise you? Did you know teachers could feel this way, too?

Johnny's pockets are always filled with treasures that he collects on his walks around town. Do you have special treasures from nature that you like to collect?

The book ends with Mother Lucy telling Johnny he is a special kind of brave, “quietly brave.” What does she mean by this? How does Johnny show this throughout the book? What are some other ways to be brave?

Author’s Note

The author’s note at the end of the book reveals some real life facts about Johnny Chapman’s life. What are two facts that are interesting to you?

