

Talking about *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*

by Kate Douglas Wiggin · the free ebook lives at youngreaderguide.org/books/rebecca-of-sunnybrook-farm/

Warming up

Easy openers. Anyone at the table can answer these, including the youngest.

1. Rebecca rides to Riverboro on top of the stage coach because riding inside makes her feel like a shut-up chicken. Where's your seat — up front with the driver, face to the window, or hidden in the back with a book?
2. Rebecca's treasure is a pink parasol with a white handle that she keeps hidden behind the door. What's the thing you own that you'd hide first if company came?

The real conversation

Pick two or three, not all of them. Parents answer too, honestly.

1. The aunts wrote asking for Hannah, the sensible sister, and the farm sent Rebecca instead. Aunt Miranda spends years wishing Rebecca were someone else. Have you ever felt someone wishing you were a different kind of person — and did they say it, or did you just know?
2. When Rebecca decides she's disgraced the family, she throws her beloved parasol down the well before anyone thinks of punishing her. Why would punishing yourself feel better than waiting for someone else to do it? Would that ever work in this house?
3. Rebecca fights to win the Simpson kids a fancy banquet lamp — for a family that can barely afford the kerosene to light it. The grown-ups think it's foolish; the kids in the book do not. What's something 'useless' you would fight to give somebody anyway?
4. Aunt Jane is the kind one, and aunt Miranda is the hard one — but it's Miranda's savings that keep Rebecca fed, clothed, and in school, and Miranda who leaves her the house. Which aunt would you rather live with? Which one actually changed Rebecca's life? Everyone has to answer both.
5. Miranda never tells Rebecca she's proud of her. The apology in the last chapter's title reaches Rebecca only through aunt Jane, after the funeral. Why do people hold the kind words back while there's still time — and is there something you're proud of someone at this table for and haven't said yet?

The big *one*

Save it for last.

Rebecca arrives in Riverboro with nothing — a mortgaged farm behind her, a borrowed trunk, a parasol — and the book treats her imagination as if it were the family fortune, the one asset that ends up rescuing everybody, aunts included. Somebody at this table is the Rebecca: the one who sees more in things than is strictly there. Who is it, and what would this family lose if they ever stopped?

Do it *together*

The Thought Book. Rebecca writes a poem about everything that happens to her, and the book's rule is the best rule: it prints them exactly as she spelled them. So — everyone at the table writes four lines of verse about one true thing from this week. It must rhyme somewhere. Spelling absolutely does not count, and correcting anybody else's is against the rules. Read them aloud, then keep them in one notebook — add four lines each time you finish a book together, and you'll have a family thought book by spring.