Book Summary
The Civil War is at an end, but for thirteen-year-old Eulinda, it is no time to rejoice. Her younger brother Zeke was sold away, her older brother Neddy joined the Northern war effort, and her master will not acknowledge that Eulinda is his daughter. Her mettle is additionally tested when she realizes her brother Neddy might be buried in the now-closed Andersonville Prison where soldiers were kept in torturous conditions. With the help of Clara Barton, the eventual founder of the Red Cross, Eulinda must find a way to let go of the skeletons from her past.

Author Information
Ann Rinaldi was born in 1934 in New York City, and had a difficult childhood. Her mother died soon after she was born, and after a brief happy period with her aunt, uncle, and cousins, she went to live with her father, four siblings, and a stepmother. Discouraged by her family from following her dreams, she was not even permitted to attend college after she finished high school. Instead she became a secretary, leaving that profession when she married in 1960. She began writing seriously when her two children were young, and though her novels were not successful, in 1969 she began a career as a newspaper columnist. In 1979, she finished a short story, "Term Paper," that grew into the young adult novel of the same name.

Suggested Answers to Literature Circle Questions
1. What does Miz Gertrude accuse Zeke of stealing? Why does Eulinda believe Zeke is really sold?
   Miz Gertrude accuses Zeke of stealing a ruby ring passed down to her from her grandmother. Eulinda believes Miz Gertrude sells Zeke “for a way to get back at me and mamma” because Eulinda was fathered by Miz Gertrude’s husband, Mr. Hampton.

2. What is Eulinda doing the day she first sees the prison? Describe what happens when Captain Wirz finds her.
   On the day she first sees the prison, Eulinda is collecting jack rabbits from her trap with her dog, Otis. Three things happen when Captain Wirz comes to the house and finds Eulinda. First, he tries to hire Eulinda out from Mistis. Second, he accuses Mistis of teaching Eulinda to read and write. Third, Captain Wirz upsets Eulinda when he says he has someone matching Neddy’s description in the prison.

3. List two things that Eulinda does to help Janie.
   First, on page 58, Eulinda helps Mistis get Janie and her baby out of the prison. Later, on page 81, Eulinda helps Janie reunite with her husband, Captain Hunt, a Union soldier who escapes from the prison.
4. Why doesn’t Neddy come home from the prison? How does seeing Mr. Hampton cry help Eulinda to realize he is no longer in charge?

On page 61, Sancho explains to Eulinda, “[Neddy] said he’d rather die a free Yankee soldier than come home an’ be a slave.” Seeing Mr. Hampton cry tells Eulinda that he wanted to bring Neddy home and to give him his freedom but that Mistis would never permit him to do so.

5. Compare Eulinda’s first encounters with Captain Wirz and Mr. Griffin. Why isn’t she afraid of Mr. Griffin?

Eulinda’s first encounter with Captain Wirz, beginning on page 33, is unpleasant. Eulinda compares Captain Wirz to a toad and a rodent; she feels threatened by the way he looks at her and senses the tension between him and Mistis. Captain Wirz is crude, disrespectful, and attempts to abuse his power as a Confederate soldier. Finally, he traumatizes Eulinda by insulting Neddy and implying that her brother is in Andersonville Prison with a terrible injury. Eulinda’s first encounter with Mr. Griffin is very different. He is respectful and gentle, even shaking Eulinda’s hand. Eulinda is sure she can trust Mr. Griffin when Otis licks his hand.

6. Why does Mr. Hampton show Eulinda the clock? Whose life do you think he is afraid "may be broken?"

Mr. Hampton shows Eulinda the clock on page 42 to make a point about interfering with events which are already in motion. “I set that clock in motion,” he says. “But if I interfere with that motion, the clock will be broken.” Mr. Hampton is trying to caution Eulinda against going to the prison to see Neddy because he knows Neddy will not want to come back with her. Mr. Hampton is likely suggesting that Neddy’s life is broken. However, given that Eulinda soon learns that Mr. Hampton is suffering mentally, readers could make a legitimate argument that he was speaking of himself as well as of Neddy.

7. Explain why Eulinda chooses not to go with Janie. Do you think she made the right decision? Why or why not?

When Janie asks Eulinda if she would like to come with her, Eulinda responds on page 77, “…it isn’t that I want to stay here. Or that I’m afraid. But there are other things I must do here, before I leave.” Eulinda senses that she has unfinished business in Pond Bluff. Even if the exact nature of the business is not made clear at the time, answers should include some mention of Zeke and Neddy.

8. Compare the way Eulinda feels about Mistis at the beginning and end of the book. What evidence can you find that her opinion has changed?

On page 4, Eulinda recalls defending Mistis to Neddy on the grounds that she had taught him to read and write. On page 33, Eulinda comments, “Mistis always had an eye out for making money,” suggesting that she is increasingly aware of Mistis’s self-serving tendencies. Likewise on page 55, Eulinda says, “Mistis could be generous when the spirit seized her.” By the end of the story, Eulinda characterizes Mistis as a phony who is intellectually outmatched by Clara Barton.
9. When Mistis makes Eulinda move out of the house and into the quarters, how does it change her view of Mr. Hampton? How does it change her view of where she belongs in Pond Bluff?

On page 89, Eulinda says of Mr. Hampton, “He said not a word about my moving to the quarters. He stepped around that subject like he would have stepped around a mess of broken eggs on the floor.” Readers should infer that Eulinda is increasingly aware of Mr. Hampton’s inability to do what he thinks is right if it means challenging Mistis. After she has moved back to the quarters, Eulinda says on page 89, “This is where I came from and this is where I belong. When the Yankees come they should find me here. Not upstairs in the big house in a featherbed. This where Neddy should find me, too.”

10. How does Eulinda know that Neddy is dead? How would the story be different if he came back to Pond Bluff after Lincoln's "Great Measure" came to pass?

On page 97, Eulinda says of Neddy, “I knew he was dead. If he were alive, he’d have come to Pond Bluff to get me.” She says this after Andersonville prison has been abandoned by the Confederate soldiers, meaning Neddy would have been free to come back to Pond Bluff if he had been alive. If Neddy had come back to Pond Bluff after the “Great Measure,” Eulinda may have had no reason to go to the prison to look for his bones and the ring. She would never have met Mr. Griffin or Clara Barton and might never have left Mistis.

11. Why does Eulinda decide to give Clara Barton the ring? Would you have made the same decision? How do you think she felt looking at the ring in the pawnshop window?

On page 162, Eulinda says to Clara, “The ring Mistis wanted. I want to give it to you. So you can take Lily and her husband and babies back to Washington.” When Clara asks Eulinda if she’s sure, Eulinda responds, “It can give a whole family new life. And I’m sure Neddy would want that. And so would Zeke.” In explaining whether they would do the same thing, readers should demonstrate some understanding of the ring’s importance to Eulinda, specifically that it was a small token to keep in memory of Zeke. Answers should also suggest some understanding that Eulinda is reaching closure and is ready to move on with her life.

12. Explain how Janie and Clara Barton changed Eulinda's ideas about women's possibilities and roles. How does meeting these two women affect Eulinda's ideas about herself?

Eulinda is impressed with Janie's self-reliance and confidence. On page 76 she says of Janie, “how I envied her assurance, the way she knew her place in the world!” Janie’s independence was likely a source of inspiration for Eulinda, who begins to take charge of her own fate when she agrees to work for Mr. Griffin. Clara Barton is another example of a woman who broadens Eulinda’s view of herself and women. Eulinda admires Barton from the start, saying on page 120, “She poured her own tea.” Thus, Barton is already different than other women Eulinda has encountered. On
page 121, Eulinda adds, “Here was a woman who got things done.” Seeing a woman act on the world further inspires Eulinda, who says on page 122, “I felt a world opening up before me as I trudged home that evening to make supper.” The impact on Eulinda’s sense of herself is immediate. By the end of the day of her first encounter with Barton, Eulinda has made up her mind to leave Pond Bluff.

13. Throughout the story, Eulinda is trying to figure out how to "make [her]self come true." Select two things that she does to achieve her dream and explain why they are important steps.

When she made the decision to leave Pond Bluff, Eulinda says, on page 164, “Here, in this place, I have shed my old life and taken on a new one. And I helped others to do so.” The first sentence of the quote suggests Eulinda made herself come true by coming to terms with the loss of her brothers. This sentence also suggests that Eulinda’s gradual separation from Pond Bluff (taking a job with Mr. Griffin, leaving with Clara Barton, etc.) also contributed to her dream. The second sentence implies that helping others was an important factor in her growth. Readers should mention later events such as Eulinda’s assistance to Mr. Griffin at Andersonville, the retrieval of the ruby ring from Neddy’s grave, her decision to give to the ring to Clara Barton, and her willingness to leave Pond Bluff for Washington, DC.

14. At the end of the book, Ann Rinaldi explains that many of the people and places in the book were real. Does this change what you think of the story? Why do you think she chose to write a fictional story instead of a nonfiction book or textbook?

In the author’s note, Ann Rinaldi writes, “My concern was with the people in the surrounding area and the simple but unanswered question that applies not only here but to the areas in World War II Germany outside the death camps.” Readers should infer that the author wanted to show how ordinary people might have viewed Andersonville Prison and what they might have thought about the suffering happening inside its walls. Look for answers which speculate that a fictional character like Eulinda allows contemporary readers to imagine how they might feel in a similar situation, in contrast to a more detached nonfiction account.

Activities

1. Imagine that Zeke and Eulinda are reunited one year after the book ends. Write a scene where they tell each other of all the things that have happened since they last saw each other.

According to Eulinda’s account, Zeke was taken away by slavers. A year later, Zeke would presumably be emancipated from slavery on a plantation somewhere in the South. We know Eulinda’s activities over the course of the year until she left Pond Bluff for Washington, DC. Readers should keep these facts in mind as they write their scenes.
2. Using the information in the Author's Note as a starting point, research one aspect of Clara Barton's life that is not part of the text and write a brief report.

The text reveals broad details about Clara Barton and several hard facts. She is described as “one of the most famous women in the world” who achieved her fame by helping others. Clara Barton tells Eulinda she became involved with the war because “the important men in Washington started a war with no thought in mind of caring for the wounded.” In her role as superintendent of nurses for the army, Barton set up field hospitals, started campaigns with her friends in the North, petitioned Congress and the Supreme Court, and helped search for missing prisoners at the behest of President Lincoln. The text also mentions that Barton had a brother in the Confederate Army who was held in a Union prison. Barton was the youngest child in her family and was raised primarily by her siblings.

3. Imagine that they are going to make a movie of Numbering All the Bones. Create a poster for the movie that would compel people to go see the film.  
Posters will vary.

Other Books by This Author: