

## Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Rebel Hart* by Edith Morris Hemingway and Jacqueline Cosgrove Shields.

1. Most of *Rebel Hart* takes place in western Virginia. In chapter one, what do we learn about the political situation in this area?
2. What is Nancy Hart's first impression of Captain Conley?
3. To avoid detection by Federal troops, what methods do the Moccasin Rangers use for communicating with each other?
4. At the dance in chapter one, Nancy yells out to the passing Federal troops: "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" Why does she do this? What does this action show about her?
5. Nancy asks her brother-in-law Will to tell Captain Conley that she wishes to join the Moccasin Rangers, but Will refuses. Give at least three reasons why Will rejects Nancy's request.
6. Immediately after joining the Rangers, Nancy is disappointed to find that her new situation does not match her expectations. Why is she so frustrated?
7. In chapter two, Nancy finds herself talking to her horse Jeremiah about wanting to join the Moccasin Rangers. Why does she say that she wants to join them? Besides what she says out loud, what might be her unspoken reasons for wanting to join Captain Conley's group?
8. Compare *Rebel Hart* with other accounts of the Civil War, such as your history textbook, other novels, or perhaps a movie or documentary you have seen. How does this account differ from others you have read or viewed?
9. Why is Nancy's brother-in-law Will killed by the Federal troops? Nancy's father blames her, saying, "You, goin' off with them bushwhackers brought all this down on our heads!" (p. 55) To what extent do you think Nancy is responsible for her brother-in-law's death?
10. What makes Nancy Hart a good spy? What characteristics help her fulfill her missions for the Moccasin Rangers?
11. How does the arrival of Mary's letter in chapter 12 help change Nancy's priorities? From Nancy's response to this letter, what do we learn about how she has changed since the beginning of the novel?

12. The story begins and ends with the elderly Nancy Hart talking with her young granddaughter Myrtle. How does this framing technique affect your reading of the story? Why do you think the authors chose to begin and end Nancy's story this way?
13. When the story begins, Nancy is thrilled at the thought of joining the Moccasin Rangers, but as her involvement with the rebel group grows, her feelings begin to change. Describe how Nancy's thoughts and feelings about the war change over time. What experiences do you think cause these changes?
14. By the end of the novel, Nancy has started learning to read and write with Josh's help. Imagine a letter she might write to her sister Mary in Kentucky after the war. Pretend you are Nancy, and write the letter, describing your feelings about the war, your family, Josh, and your experiences with the Moccasin Rangers.
15. To whom would you recommend *Rebel Hart*? Write a specific, detailed recommendation for this person, explaining why you think he or she would enjoy the book.

*Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-13; Evaluation: 14-15.*

#### Activities:

1. Many of the characters in *Rebel Hart* speak in a dialect that reflects the story's setting—western Virginia in the early 1860s. Choose a scene with dialogue to present as a readers' theater to your class. Practice reading your scene expressively to a group of students, and be prepared to present it to the whole class.
2. What do you consider to be the five or six most important scenes from *Rebel Hart*? Create a storyboard in which you illustrate the scenes you think are essential to the novel's plot. For each scene you choose, include a short caption to help explain it, and be prepared to justify why you chose the scenes you did.
3. Imagine that you have been chosen to design a recruitment poster for the Moccasin Rangers. How would you motivate Confederate sympathizers to join your cause? Draw a poster to encourage young people to join Captain Conley's group, using your knowledge of the Moccasin Rangers from *Rebel Hart*.

**Other Books by These Authors:** *Broken Drum* and *Drums of War*.