

# BOOKNOTES

TEACHERS GUIDE

## thematic connections

**Cultural Diversity • Courage  
Family • Gender Roles**

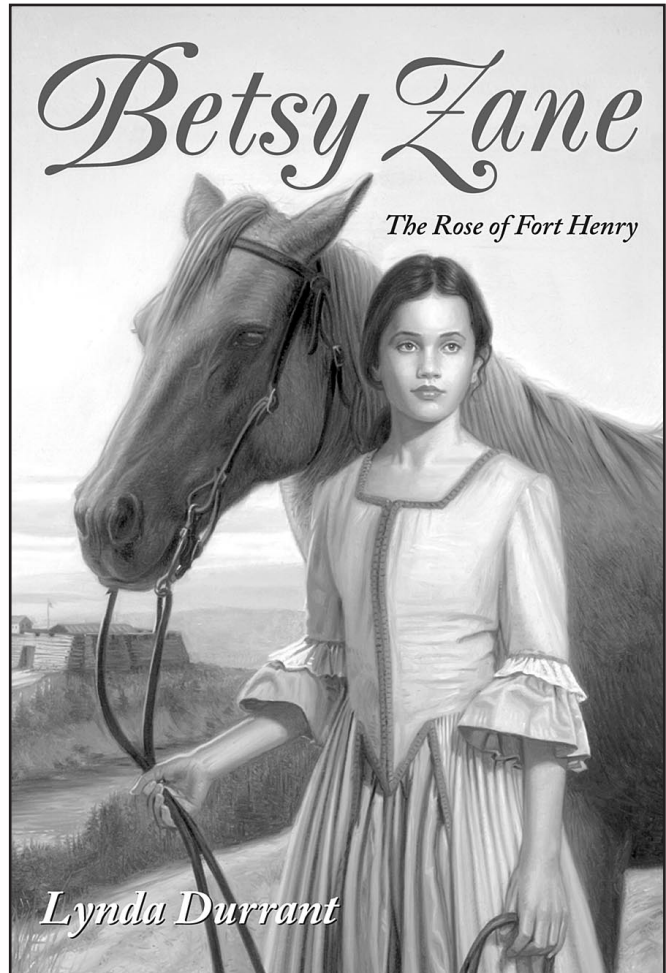
**Grades 5 up**

## about the book

Based on the life of the real Betsy Zane, including her historic run for gunpowder, which turned the tide in the final battle of the Revolutionary War, this novel offers a compelling portrait of a young woman and a new nation, both on the very brink of independence.

After Betsy's parents are killed by Indians, her older brother sends her to Philadelphia to live with her Great Aunt Elizabeth who can teach her to become a proper lady. Betsy learns her lessons and does what she is told, but she dreams of returning to the frontier where she can ride her horse freely and swim in the Ohio River.

When her great aunt dies, Betsy frees the two house slaves, packs up what she and her two horses can carry, and finds passage with a family to Pittsburgh where she can catch a ride on a flatboat to Zane Station.



Dell Yearling paperback • 0-440-41834-8

After her adventure on the trip home, Betsy settles in, but when Fort Henry is attacked, all of the Zane family and the soldiers stationed at the fort must fight the Indians and the British. Betsy saves the day when she risks her life to retrieve gunpowder.

*Students will enjoy this exciting account of a real-life heroine's adventures on the western frontier.*

## pre-reading activity

This novel takes place at the close of the Revolutionary War in 1781. Discuss why this war was fought, and what America gained. Everyday life in the United States has changed drastically in the last 200 years. Provide resources (books, Internet sites, etc.) and ask students to briefly investigate one of the following changes to report on to the class: modes of transportation, ways of communication, medical facilities, education, food preparation and purchase, or clothing.

## thematic connections

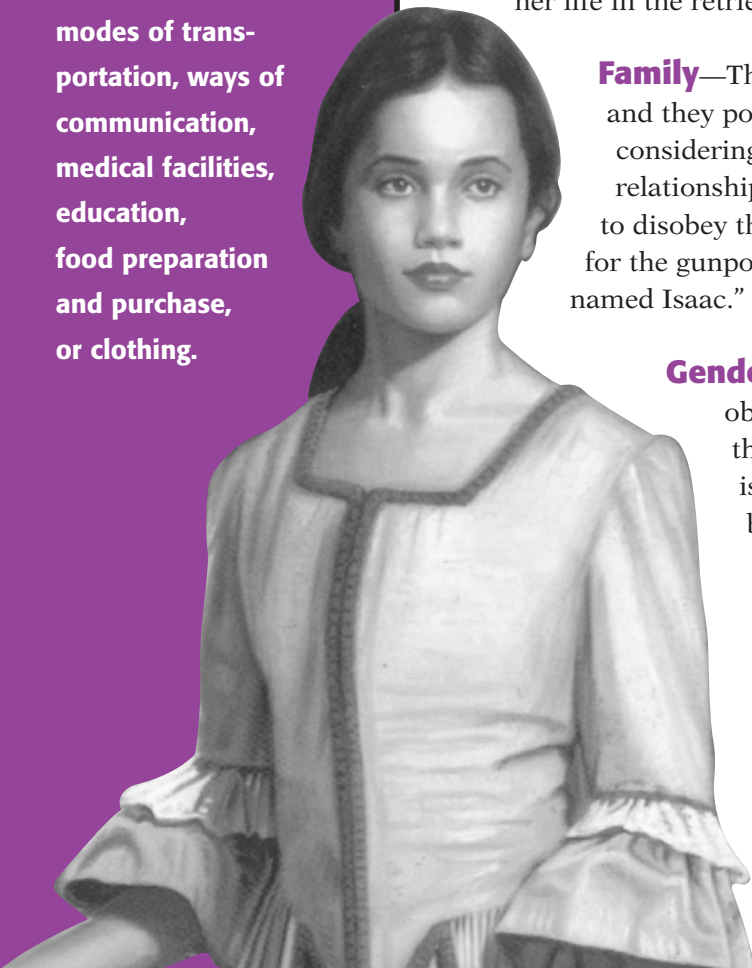
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**Cultural Diversity**—Betsy Zane comes in contact with people from different cultural backgrounds: the Crofters who are Scottish; Old Bess and her son Tom who are African American slaves; Dr. Weyberg, the pastor of the German Reformed Church. How does Betsy relate to these individuals? What does she learn about herself and society from these encounters? How do her brothers' views of Indians and African Americans differ from her own?

**Courage**—Ask students to define courage and give examples of ways Betsy demonstrated courage. How would Betsy Zane define courage? Discuss why the Zanes, Crofters, and other families like them would be willing to risk their lives and possessions for their pride or their homes. How does the motivation for risk differ between the Zanes and the Crofters? What motivates Betsy to risk her life in the retrieval of gunpowder?

**Family**—The Zane family is bound together by a strong heritage, and they possess pride in their name. Why is this important considering the time in which they live? Describe Betsy's relationship with her brothers. Why does she feel it is important to disobey them when she leaves Philadelphia and when she runs for the gunpowder? Eb says: "The Zanes do not have a brother named Isaac." (p. 96) Why has Isaac let his brothers down?

**Gender Roles**—In Betsy's time, women are submissive and obedient to their fathers and/or husbands. In view of this, how is Betsy able to break out of the path that she is meant to follow? How does Betsy convince her brothers to let her have a choice in her life? Are women today free to make choices about their lives? Why or why not?



# connecting to the curriculum

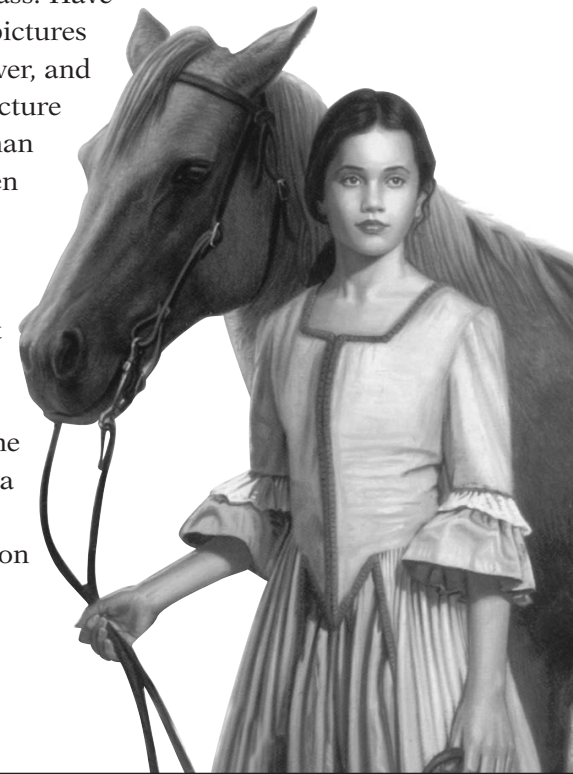
**Language Arts**—Betsy grows weary as her Great Aunt Elizabeth tells her the same stories over and over about how “it used to be.” Have students write a story that they have heard from a parent or grandparent about “the good old days,” and then have each student read his/her story aloud to the class. Compile all the stories into a book, and encourage students to share them with residents of local nursing homes.

**Social Studies**—Betsy Zane is one of many women who have contributed to war efforts throughout the history of the United States. Ask students to investigate women involved in other wars who have made a difference in the lives of the soldiers who fought in battle. Have students give the name of the woman, the war in which she was involved, and the contribution she made to the war effort. Students should be prepared to report to the class.

Mary Crofter reveals to Betsy that she and her family are runaway slaves (p. 44). Betsy is shocked because the Crofters are white, and she assumes they are indentured servants. Ask students to investigate indentured servants and report to the class who they were, where they were from, and why they were indentured.

**Science**—In preparation for Christmas, Betsy and her cousins make cakes to feed the wild birds: wrens, redbirds, chickadees, blue jays, nuthatches, and tufted titmice (p. 102). Have students find out what kind of seeds they would need to attract wild birds in the area and how they could make cakes for the birds to eat during the winter. Ask each student to bring an ingredient to make cakes for the birds. Students can then report on the types of birds they see.

**Art**—Jonathan Zane takes great comfort in sitting on the porch watching the Ohio River pass him by. He could see across the river to the trees and watch the flatboats pass. Have students find pictures of the Ohio River, and then draw a picture of what Jonathan might have seen from the river porch at Zane Station. Or, students might paint or draw one mural of scenes along the Ohio River on a large sheet of paper to hang on the wall.



## vocabulary/ use of language

The author uses similes to help readers see pictures in their minds. Remind students that a simile is a figure of speech in which two distinct things are compared by using “like” or “as.” As a class, investigate the words and meanings in these similes: “jammed together as pickled herring in a crockery jar,” (p. 1); “memories of Zane Station are lodged in my mind like burrs stuck to a horse’s forelock,” (p. 3); “High Street Market is airless, jammed with people, and as hot as a blacksmith’s forge,” (p. 5); “his shirt is soaked through and as transparent as candlewax,” (p. 7). Have students find other similes as they read.

## related titles

### by theme

### **The Beaded Moccasins: The Story of Mary Campbell**

**Lynda Durrant**

Cultural Diversity • Historical Fiction

0-440-41591-8

Dell Yearling

### **Echohawk**

**Lynda Durrant**

Cultural Diversity • Family Life & Relationships

Historical Fiction

0-440-41438-5

Dell Yearling

### **Thunder Rolling in the Mountains**

**Scott O'Dell and Elizabeth Hall**

Cultural Diversity • Historical Fiction

0-440-40879-2

Dell Yearling

### **Johnny Tremain**

**Esther Forbes**

Historical Fiction • Revolutionary War

0-440-44250-8

Dell Yearling

## on the web

For bios, teachers guides, and more . . .

Visit our FREE online site  
**Teachers @ Random**

[www.randomhouse.com/teachers](http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers)

## internet resources

### **West Virginia History: Story of Fort Henry**

[www.wvculture.org/history/journal\\_wvh/wvh1-2.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh1-2.html)

This site discusses the actual events that took place at Fort Henry and provides a description of the fort.

### **Fort Henry**

[www.forthenry.net](http://www.forthenry.net)

This site chronicles the battle at Fort Henry and mentions Betsy Zane's courage in retrieving the gunpowder.

### **History of Native Americans in West Virginia**

[www.wvculture.org/history/indians.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/indians.html)

Click on "Revolutionary War & the Aftermath."  
This site tells about the Indian tribes that were involved in the attack on Fort Henry.

## about the author

**Lynda Durrant** lives with her husband and son in Bath, Ohio, on a horse farm. She loves animals and loves to write. Her historical fiction books are based on actual events in the lives of people and revolve around Native American Indians. They are full of adventure and excitement and paint a picture of what life was like for those who lived in our past. Her award-winning books speak to the hearts of the children who read them.