

Letting Swift River Go
Discussion Guide
Grades 3-5

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Discuss the importance of water in everyday life. How do you use it (flushing toilets, washing dishes, fire fighters, watering plants, etc.)? Where does it come from? Make a list of student generated responses on an anchor chart or whiteboard.
- Before reading, have a class discussion to activate prior knowledge about reservoirs. Where are they? What are they? Why do we have them? How are they created?
- Frontload vocabulary: Reservoir, Dam, Dike, Caisson, and trade-off.

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- What do you know about Sally Jane's community in Swift River? How do you know that? What do the illustrations teach you?
- Does Sally Jane enjoy the place that she lives in? How do you know? What types of activities does she enjoy?
- How is nature described throughout the story? What are some examples from the illustrations or text?
- How do you think the community members feel during the meeting at Grange Hall? What makes you think that?
- How does Sally Jane feel at the end of the book? How would you feel if you were in her situation?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

Make a chart of the pros and cons of building the Quabbin Reservoir. Arrange your class and assign roles to participate in a mock town hall at Grange Hall. Assign roles such as townspeople, Boston lawyers and business owners, town mayor, etc. You may use the chart of pros and cons to prepare for the speeches at the mock town hall meeting.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.