

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Created by [Phil Bildner](#), author of *"Shoeless Joe and Black Betsy"*

Aunt Patty seems to be a particular kind of person in the beginning of the story, what kind of person does she seem to you to be? By the end of the story she has had a change of heart. What do you feel brought that about?

What secret was Willa Jo keeping? Would you have felt the same way? Would you have told this secret to anyone?

At one point in the story, Aunt Patty was keeping a secret too, and it had to do with june bugs. What was the secret, and what does it tell us about how much Aunt Patty cared for the girls?

Willa Jo didn't like having her shoes taken from her. Why do you think that was?

In what way does Uncle Hob act as a bridge where Willa Jo and Aunt Patty can meet in the middle?

In what way does Little Sister's silence serve the story?

If you had walked by Aunt Patty's house and saw Willa Jo and Little Sister up on the roof, what would you have thought of that?

In some stories, when children find an environment uninhabitable, as Willa Jo found Aunt Patty's home to be, they run away. In what way was Willa Jo's choice a braver or wiser one?

In many good stories, there are new ideas. A character says or does something you would not have said or done yourself. What were some of the new ideas you encountered in *Getting Near to Baby*?

So much of the story happened with Willa Jo and Little Sister up on the roof. What site

did Willa Jo and Little Sister visit that was the exact opposite of being on the roof? Can you see how this balances the story?

Other elements in the story balance Aunt Patty's overbearing personality. There is one adult character that is super-sweet and loving, and one adult character that is plainly mean-spirited. Who are those characters?

Some who don't know her well might call Willa Jo a stubborn unreasonable girl. Some might think she tried to get even with Aunt Patty, tried to embarrass her by staying up on the roof. In what ways do Liz Fingers and Cynthia Wainwright balance Willa Jo's personality so that we might see her as a well-meaning girl? What events demonstrate her to be a reasonable girl?

In what way is it a good thing that Willa Jo is stubborn? What is another word for stubborn that is more positive?