

Edith Shay Short Guide

Edith Shay by Alexandria LaFaye

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Overview

In August 1869, Wisconsin teenager Katherine Lunden deviates from her family's plans for her to visit and work for relatives in Michigan. Instead, thinking she has been forgotten at the train station, she is motivated by the discovery of an unclaimed suitcase marked with the name Edith Shay to travel to Chicago where she has long dreamed of going. In that city, Katherine secures employment and makes friends.

She assumes the identity of Edith Shay when people think that is her name because it is on the suitcase she carries. Katherine later leaves Chicago and attempts to locate the real Edith Shay. She reinforces her own identity in the process.



About the Author

Storytelling has always been part of Alexandria (R. T.) LaFaye's life. Born on March 9, 1970, in Hudson, Wisconsin, LaFaye grew up in a rural Mississippi River community just east of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. Her family encouraged her imaginative talents and reading interests.

LaFaye's father, Patrick LaFaye, worked as an aviation mechanic, and her mother, Rita LaFaye, managed an office. Constantly inventing characters and scenarios, LaFaye told elaborate tales to entertain her parents and friends.

LaFaye attended St. Croix Elementary School in nearby Roberts. She often wrote lengthy stories, exceeding page limits for school assignments. In a [teenreads.com](#) interview, "I'd jump in and write away," she remembered. "Twenty pages later, I'd just be getting into the story." LaFaye realized she had potential as a writer when her sixth grade English teacher, Mr. Magee, praised her work to her classmates and called her a "talented storyteller." She recalls in the [teenread.com](#) article, "So, I started to write.

I wrote novel after novel from that day forward." LaFaye handwrote her first book, *Phantom on the Terrace*, a ghost story featuring her friends.

After graduating from St. Croix Central High School at Hammond in 1988, LaFaye enrolled at Mankato State University in Minnesota. Three years later, she transferred to the University of Minnesota where she earned a bachelor of arts degree in comparative colonial history in 1992. LaFaye considered history to be a practical field, but her heart longed to write fiction. While living in Minneapolis, LaFaye honed her storytelling skills by performing original stories to entertain neighbors who did not have televisions.

Edith Shay 115 In 1993, LaFaye returned to Mankato State University, completing a master of arts degree in creative writing and multicultural literature by June 1994. LaFaye took a variety of classes, including linguistics, to attain a better comprehension of language. Her goal was to write professionally and teach creative writing and literature at the college level. LaFaye's thesis, "Edith Shay," represented her creative writing studies with Terry Davis, the author of *Vision Quest*. She then enrolled at the University of Memphis where she completed a master of fine arts degree in creative writing in December 1995. Her thesis, "The Duchess of Skien," later became her first published young adult novel, *The Year of the Sawdust Man*.

During the summer of 1995, LaFaye began attending the graduate children's literature program at Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia. She also enrolled in Illinois State University's doctoral program in children's literature. LaFaye graduated from Hollins with a master of arts in children's literature in 1998, presenting the creative writing thesis "Strawberry Hill," which was published the next year.



LaFaye began teaching as an English instructor at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, in 1997. She then accepted a faculty creative writing position at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

LaFaye currently is an assistant professor of English at the University of California at San Bernardino. She occasionally teaches creative writing to children's literature students at Hollins.

LaFaye's writing honors recognized her literary merit. *The Year of the Sawdust Man* and *Nissa's Place* were both given stars by Publishers Weekly and placed on the Accelerated Reader list. The Banks Street School of Education named Edith Shay the "Best Book of the Year 1998," and that novel was also selected for the Accelerated Reader list.

Strawberry Hill was nominated for the Mark Twain Award and named to the Accelerated Reader list.

LaFaye also writes fiction for adults, but most of her work is for children because "I still have a child approach to a lot of things."

She also told Teenreads.com that "I try to be true to the stories I'm telling and the characters within them." Like her protagonist, Katherine Lunden, LaFaye enjoys traveling in North America and abroad to see new places.

Setting

Places enchant Katherine Lunden. She dreams of traveling throughout the United States and perhaps abroad. Katherine considers her home in the rural logging country of Wisconsin to be boring and lacking possible opportunities for her future. She lives near Maustone, the county seat of Juneau County. Lunden Woods in that area is named for her ancestors who arrived there before the American Revolution concluded. For generations, Lunden's have harvested Wisconsin timber, and descendants are expected to live their entire lives there.

Although Katherine's family indulged in building a plank house, she is dissatisfied with her surroundings. She says that newspapers revealed "there was a whole world out there and a million ways to live in it."

A train journey sets Katherine on the first eight months of her life away from Wisconsin. The train represents freedom and excitement to her. Katherine often visited the train station in Maustone to receive newspapers from conductors and wonder about the passengers and trips they were taking. The train she rides to Michigan offers her a new experience and a chance to go someplace she has never been. Katherine does not care that the trip is long and tiring.

The railroad also represents betrayal. At the Clarkston, Michigan, train station, Katherine feels isolated when her relatives do not arrive to take her to their home. Railroad employees are unhelpful and question whether she should be traveling alone. They also are unethical, suggesting that it is all right to take unclaimed luggage. On the train to Philadelphia, in the first class section, Katherine is robbed by a young man she trusted. As a result, she once again is forced to rely on her ability to do menial work in order to earn her board and additional train fare. Because of Katherine's passion for trains, she is disappointed to learn that tracks between northern and southern states have not been reconnected with direct standard gauge rails since the Civil War. Her efforts to contact Edith Shay are complicated as she seeks travel routes.

Katherine is determined not to let Chicago intimidate her. Her father had warned that city life would be too much for Katherine. Thomas, her brother, said that she would not last long in the city, commenting about a young man from their community who abandoned his job and acted jittery because of his experiences in Chicago.

Although she is tempted to cable her father for help, Katherine boldly secures temporary employment at hotels in order to have a place to sleep.

O'Dell's Royal Stitchery becomes Katherine's sanctuary in Chicago. Not only does she have a steady place to work and improve her sewing skills but Katherine also acquires more comfortable quarters. She is excited by the size of her room, which is large enough for her to dance a jig. The room is equipped with a big bed with a cotton-filled mattress, wardrobe, and related furnishings.



Katherine explores and becomes familiar with the Chicago she had only read about previously in newspapers. She sees townhouses which enable more people to live compactly in an area. Because so many people live in Chicago, Katherine realizes that she could probably walk around the city without seeing a familiar face. She frequents the library to learn more about her new environment and to create stories about her future. Katherine visits the O'Dells' home in the Lake Forest suburb.

The wooden house has an elaborately etched glass oval in its door and blue shingles on its roof. Inside, Katherine admires the elegant decorations and wood trim. At this setting, the characters examine an atlas and reveal their dreams of where they wish to travel, and Katherine learns that Aesylnn O'Dell is a self-made woman from a humble background.

Philadelphia contrasts with Wisconsin and Chicago. Most of the houses are stone with plaques, dormer windows, and keystones. The streets consist of cobblestones and bricks. Parks provide access to nature at this urban setting. Katherine realizes that Philadelphia is historic, in that many of the buildings were built during the colonial period. The shipyard adds to an atmosphere, which makes the place seem foreign to Katherine as compared to Wisconsin and Chicago. Although the printer's shop is a hostile place where Katherine is forced to relinquish her power, she flourishes during her hours at the boarding house.

Both Philadelphia settings help her mature and gain autonomy to speak and act for herself.

Katherine skillfully traverses the streets of Washington, D.C., to deliver Doreen Rayburn's gifts to her grandchildren. At this site, Katherine is treated respectfully like an adult instead of a vulnerable child.

Because of her access to a college professor and students, she becomes more aware of the possibilities available to her. Katherine's metamorphosis achieves completion at 1919 Fillmore Lane in Richmond, Virginia. At the "burnt-out shell of a house" with cracked windows, she learns the fate of Edith Shay and resolves not to abandon her aspirations just because this quest has concluded.



Social Sensitivity

Manners are important in this novel.

Characters politely use courtesy titles, such as Mrs. Albert Lunden, to reveal their respect. Katherine is concerned about honesty, apologizing to people to whom she has lied and explaining why. She carefully expresses her gratitude for kindnesses and generosity and asks for forgiveness for her shortcomings. Katherine often prays and strives to become a better person. She misses her family, and her memories recall what good people her parents and grandparents are. Generational differences are minimized, and Katherine is able to communicate well with people both younger and older than she is.

Katherine is a diligent worker who realizes that she must earn her way to survive.

She works in her hometown mercantile to earn money in the hopes that she will travel to Chicago in the future. Katherine also industriously performs chores at home to help and please her parents. After she leaves Wisconsin, Katherine accepts work cooking and sewing in exchange for rooms to sleep. She even works during Christmas to earn extra income. Katherine endures insults from customers because she realizes that she lacks qualifications for better paying jobs and accepts that the menial tasks she performs are socially acceptable for someone in her situation. She willingly accepts instruction to improve her sewing skills in an effort to become a better employee.

Family is emphasized in this novel. Katherine respects her parents even though she disagrees with them about her future. She intends to marry and raise children, although she prefers to choose her mate instead of being paired with someone her parents select. Katherine admires men who are kind, polite, and courteous. She also seeks someone who is adventurous and interested in intellectual matters and exploring places beyond their hometowns.

Katherine learns about dating protocol for ladies, in which gentleman ask a parent or chaperon for permission to court a young woman. She receives informal lessons in love as various women explain why they married for happiness or security.

Appalled when male customers make rude comments or try to touch her, Katherine refuses to act immorally. She quickly assures hoteliers that she is a virtuous girl.

Katherine knows that criticizing men who ridicule or dismiss her might be considered provocative, and she learns to keep silent for protection.

Immigrants are portrayed as valuable members of American communities. Similarly, women's rights are presented through independent female characters who are capable of taking care of themselves. They do not reject marriage but expect to be respected and valued by men as equals and not kept in servile roles. These characters pursue professions that reflect their interests and talents. Although men may not be ready to



accept women as journalists, Katherine does not permit those attitudes to discourage her from pursuing her aspirations.

For the most part, the female and immigrant characters support each other in coping with problems and achieving goals.

Katherine encounters elitism. On the train to Michigan, she realizes that her clothes are of a poorer quality than those worn by other women who do not speak to her.

Katherine does not wear a hat or gloves, emphasizing her status as a lower-income rural resident. In Chicago, she realizes how women's appearance helps them become socially acceptable. Dressmakers emphasize the quality of cloth and accessories and fit of garments. Katherine also learns social rules such as never speaking of money in a lady's presence. Doreen Rayburn's spoiled daughter-in-law is an extreme example of social elitism. Taken care of by servants, she rejects and destroys gifts from her mother-in-law because she is working class.

Katherine realizes some of her behaviors are wrong. She feels remorse for running away and realizes that her parents are fretting about her disappearance. She responsibly writes them to explain her whereabouts. When their responses denounce her, Katherine never loses faith that someday her parents will forgive her. Recognizing that she acted irresponsibly by failing to help her relatives, Katherine offers to reimburse her aunt for the train fare.

She feels guilty for taking Edith Shay's name, but admits that action emboldened her to begin her new life. Katherine also feels badly that she lies to Aesylnn, who helped her. She later confesses to Aesylnn, who understands and wants to continue their friendship. Katherine acknowledges that stealing is immoral when the stationmaster tells her to take Edith Shay's suitcase. She expresses outrage at other characters' criminal behavior, such as robbery and abusiveness. Katherine dutifully strives to do the right thing such as returning Edith Shay's suitcase to her, although she feels guilt for giving the items in the suitcase to the Rayburn children.

Literary Qualities

This novel capably transports and guides readers to a different era and place like newspapers lead Katherine out of Wisconsin. LaFaye's figurative writing conveys the complexity of her characters and settings.

Critics have referred to her style as poetic, lyrical, and poignant. By providing psychological depth to her characters, LaFaye creates appealing young adult personalities who are struggling with dilemmas with which readers can identify.

Katherine's first person perspective guides readers through her experiences and secrets as she undergoes the transition from a rural girl to a self-sufficient urban woman.

Katherine seems like a credible narrator who attempts to depict people without bias.

In the first sentence, "My hands were addicted to ink," Katherine asserts her identity. Her stained hands symbolize her determination to learn more about the world regardless of constraints. Her story gradually unfolds as Katherine tells about present events, reminisces about the past, and dreams about her future. Chapter titles alert readers to themes and plot developments as Katherine adjusts to her new life.

LaFaye creates believable historical fiction by making authentic details familiar and thus accessible to readers. Katherine describes family traditions such as Christmas ornaments, which would be timeless and recognizable to most readers. By weaving dreams, thoughts, and memories about her family at home, and stories about Wisconsin into the main narrative, LaFaye provides background information about Katherine. Aeslynn's stories about Ireland also enhance characterization and advance the plot.

LaFaye's writing style reflects her attention to selecting words and images carefully to express her ideas. Her exquisite language presents visual scenes to readers.

For example, one of Katherine's stitches resembles a grain of rice. A boarding house is "chicken-beak yellow," and the sky is blue like the velvet in a family bible. Katherine's skin is white like ice, and she blushes red like clay. Sensory descriptions, often referring to Wisconsin to emphasize Katherine's homesickness, include the scent of pine sap and new snow. Katherine recalls rosebuds embroidered on her mother's clothing and how she twisted a braid around her finger.

Foreshadowing is an effective literary device in this novel. Readers sense Katherine's eagerness to leave her home for the unknown. They might suspect Harlan Wilson has sinister intentions when he reassures Katherine that he will not steal her suitcase.

Katherine's memory of chasing a rabbit when she was three and becoming lost in the woods foreshadows her pursuing the mysterious Edith Shay. Katherine recalls how scared she was when her world stretched then and shrank.



Dialogue provides information from other characters which supplements Katherine's point of view. Aesylnn's accent emphasizes her strong Irish character. She refers to her father as Da and likes to share practical advice based on her hardships during the potato famine, stressing, "Anyone who puts their heart into soil is half buried."

Epistles, such as letters and a telegram, used as literary devices reveal external facts such as Katherine's mother instructing her aunt to "Keep her waiting." Readers have the knowledge that the aunt plans to show up eventually to claim Katherine, but Katherine does not know this.

Alluring words surround and empower Katherine whether in the form of newspapers, signs, or destinations posted at railroad stations. Katherine knows the power of words. Newspaper advertisements and articles enabled her to tour Chicago, pretending to buy fruit and see the safari display at the museum, before she was able to go there. Words also alienated her family, who asked her to stop reading aloud after she announced the news of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination.



Themes and Characters

Sixteen-year-old Katherine Candace Lunden exemplifies the themes of adventure and independence. Having never been thirty miles from Maustone she is curious about the world beyond her rural Wisconsin home and yearns to explore. Katherine has two passions, newspapers and trains.

Both seem uncharacteristic interests for a young woman during the late 1860s, but they indicate that Katherine is not a typical girl. She anticipates someday leaving her safe, dull, rural surroundings for the excitement of the city. She watches trains at the local station where she waits for conductors to give her newspapers from distant places.

These periodicals serve as her guide to communities she imagines visiting.

Although she loves and respects her parents, Albert and Candace Lunden, Katherine feels stifled by their traditional cultural expectations, which she resists. Her mother thinks that Katherine should learn domestic duties so that she can marry a local boy and have children like generations of women in her family have done. She does not want Katherine to leave. Afraid of the unknown, she cannot understand why Katherine considers Chicago and other urban places appealing. Nor does she comprehend Katherine's fascination with newspapers. Both Albert and Candace expect Katherine to comply obediently with their plans for her future, including a trip to help relatives in Michigan.

Arriving in Michigan, Katherine longs to travel more when she sees destinations posted at the train station. After her relatives, Charles and Fran Robert, fail to arrive, Katherine impulsively spends most of her money to travel to Chicago. She is determined to prove that she can take care of herself in the city. Katherine strives to show herself and her family that she can be self-reliant and autonomous. Survival is the theme as Katherine works as a cook and seamstress in Chicago because she lacks credentials and skills for better-paying positions, then accepts employment in other cities as she travels looking for the real Edith Shay. Katherine endures loneliness, homesickness, self-doubt, and difficulties interacting with people. She sometimes cries due to despair and exhaustion.

Identity becomes a significant theme as Katherine denies her true self publicly. Edith Shay is depicted as two characters, the real and the imagined. Katherine's alternate identity does not resemble the actual Edith Shay, who later is revealed to be a grandmother, but she convinces people that she is that person. Her ruse is plausible because she does not encounter anyone who was familiar with Shay. The suitcase's contents are Katherine's only clues to Shay's personality and interests. By pretending to be Shay and taking risks, Katherine is able to learn what she is capable of and to pursue her dreams of seeking the life that she envisions, and not the one that others intend for her.

Katherine often imagines conversations she might have with Shay in which they would discuss such topics as the Civil War Richmond siege. Shay shares observations and



advice that Katherine thinks Shay might have. They reflect what Katherine believes and wishes someone would validate. These fantasies help Katherine survive traumatic situations and help her achieve her own identity. By the time she learns Shay's fate, Katherine is optimistic and describes herself as a woman, no longer a girl, who is capable of taking care of herself and has so much to accomplish.

Katherine's parents initially reject her efforts to apologize and reconcile. Too proud to forgive what they perceive as her rejection and betrayal of her family, they tell her that she cannot return home. Katherine recalls her brother Thomas ridiculing her desire to go to Chicago by doubting that she is capable of living in a city. Throughout her exile from home, Katherine becomes sentimental for such things as her grandmother making honey sandwiches and her grandfather saving the first watermelon slice for Katherine. Katherine softens in her memories of her mother. She remembers that her mother is kind and generous. During storms, Candace would sit in Katherine's and Thomas's room and tell stories to distract them.

Katherine also recognizes that one of the reasons her mother loathes railroads and other places is because her father's coffin arrived on a train from the Virginia coal field where he died, while everyone else was greeting living relatives.

Candace worries that Aesylnn O'Dell is replacing her in Katherine's life. O'Dell is Katherine's most important mentor. The owner of O'Dell's Royal Stitchery, Aesylnn has qualities which Katherine admires and wants to emulate. O'Dell reminds Katherine of how her mother organizes her work, but their personalities are quite different. A potato famine emigrant, Aesylnn has traveled and encourages Katherine to pursue her aspirations and not let anyone discourage her. Considering Katherine to be like a daughter, Aesylnn teaches her how to sew by hand and on a sewing machine. She tells her to look people in the eye and not to be afraid of taking risks. When Katherine explains she needs to leave, Aesylnn purchases a first class train ticket for her.

Ethane O'Dell, Aesylnn's husband, represents exactly the type of man Katherine would like to marry. She considers him a gentleman. An attorney, he drives Aesylnn to and from work in his buggy and provides her with a nice house. Ethane calls Aesylnn by her first name publicly instead of using the title Mrs. like Katherine's parents do in front of people. Katherine thinks this affectionate act is romantic. When Aesylnn asks Katherine her ambitions, Katherine responds that she wants to improve herself, earn money, and marry. Aesylnn advises her that appearance counts most to men, and generously pays for an elegant outfit at the dress shop owned by her business associates, the Metrell sisters, which will help Katherine attract appropriate suitors.

Katherine's co-workers are less supportive. The unpleasant Elly constantly criticizes Katherine's sewing. Sisters Opal and Louise Dyer constantly talk about their families and ask questions about Katherine's family. Charlotte and Rachell Mertell initially dismiss Katherine as being unworthy of their talents to dress women fashionably, but they admit that one of dresses was superb and purchased by Mrs. Roberta Babcock, a shipping magnate's wife. At the Greymore Hotel where Katherine works a second job,



Mrs. Hessmueller forces Katherine to pay for damages and stay away from work until her cuts heal after she falls.

Other negative characters include the deceased stitchery building owner who is mentioned because he hated anyone Irish, hinting of the conflicts Aeslynn may have overcome. The themes of disguise and deception are twisted when Harlan Wilson wins Katherine's trust by pretending to be a friendly college student on the train. Hoping to meet an interesting man, Katherine is deceived by Wilson's sophisticated manner, dress, and manicured nails and agrees to let him buy her a sandwich, which he possibly drugs. She is shocked that this gentleman is actually a thief.

Lawford Denison is probably the most damaging character that Katherine encounters. His wife, Vivian, rescues Katherine after her money is stolen. The Denisons give Katherine a job at their print shop cleaning steel letters used to set type. They introduce her to boarding house owner Doreen Rayburn. Lawford insists on keeping Katherine's suitcase as collateral in case she robs or cheats him. Katherine helplessly surrenders her control. She is upset when she realizes saying her name is Edith Shay has become second nature. Katherine is bored by what she thought would be a dream job to create books.

Lawford abusively hits Katherine's knuckles when she makes mistakes while setting type. He also demeans her and says she is not intelligent, and she realizes she is losing her confidence. When she forgets her birthday, Katherine despairs that she no longer has a sense of herself. She stands up for herself when Lawford does not pay her wages and tries to keep her suitcase when she says she is leaving. Although he writes a recommendation letter stating that Katherine worked for him as a printer's apprentice, Lawford says that she works best in domestic positions. Katherine later realizes that Lawson greedily looked through her suitcase and violated her privacy.

Katherine finds other kindred characters on her journey. In Chicago, Gillian is a girl who buys scraps to make quilts she sells to hotels and hospitals. She shares her books with Katherine and eagerly listens to Katherine's stories about her grandparents saving their Wisconsin homestead. Philadelphia boarding house owner Doreen Rayburn treats Katherine as if she were family. She reassures Katherine that she is not flawed and says that Lawson acts abusively to cover his weaknesses. She gives Katherine gifts to deliver to her son, Richard Rayburn, a George Washington University philosophy professor.

Although Richard is welcoming, his wife is cold towards Katherine. Harriet, the family's maid, tells Katherine that Doreen and her daughter-in-law disagree about how to raise the Rayburn children and keep house.

When Katherine learns that the daughter-in-law destroyed Doreen's gifts, she generously distributes the contents of Edith Shay's suitcase to the children. Katherine keeps a locket with a picture she assumes is Edith.

Granddaughter Amelia is a college student who complains that she is frustrated at not being allowed to take the same academic classes as men. Her comments enlighten Katherine about future possibilities.



Topics for Discussion

1. How does LaFaye make Katherine's impulsiveness seem plausible? In what ways do her emotions control Katherine? How does she mature during her experiences?
2. What factors contribute to Katherine's resilience and perseverance? What bolsters her courage?
3. How does Katherine differ from her coworkers? How are they similar?
4. How are families defined in this novel?
5. How does LaFaye make Katherine's aspirations seem realistic for a nineteenth-century teenage girl?
6. Discuss how rural and urban communities are depicted in this novel. How does Katherine present a biased perspective of Wisconsin?
7. How are love, romance, and marriage portrayed in this book? Are Katherine's expectations for a husband and married life unrealistic?
8. What are Katherine's resources for survival? Why is her ability to innovate and adapt essential to attain autonomy?
9. How effective are the letters included in the text as a literary device?
10. How are any characters, such as immigrants and women, stereotyped in this novel?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research the roles of women during the Reconstruction period of United States history. Write a report about how LaFaye's female characters accurately represent women at this time. How do any of the characters deviate from standards expected of mid-nineteenth century women?
2. Look at issues of post-Civil War newspapers. What stories might have appealed to Katherine? If you lived at that time, which advertisements might have enticed you to apply for employment, shop at a specific store, or travel to an intriguing destination?
3. Write a paper about the role of trains in American transportation immediately after the Civil War. Comment on whether or not it was realistic for women and children to travel alone on the railroad at that time.
4. Learn how children were treated after the Civil War. What parental demands annoyed Katherine? How was this normal or atypical of that era?
5. Find information about each of the places at the time they were depicted in this novel. Write a brief travel report, either encouraging or discouraging friends to move to each location.
6. Analyze the theme of identity in this novel? What shapes each character's identity?
7. Write a paper about how home is depicted in this novel, comparing the use of home as a symbol in children's literature.
8. Research the employment described in this novel. Who would have been loggers, seamstresses, and printers at this time?
What qualifications were required for each position?
9. Write a reader's theater act in which Edith Shay and Katherine meet in the Michigan train station before Shay died.
How might this encounter have altered this novel?
10. Prepare a profile of a pioneering woman traveling correspondent. What experiences and characteristics did those early journalists share with Katherine?

For Further Reference

"LaFaye, Alexandria R. T." In *Something about the Author*, vol. 105. Detroit: Gale, 1999. In addition to biographical data, this article tells about LaFaye's development as a creative writer.

Review of Edith Shay. *Publishers Weekly*, vol.

245 (October 12, 1998): 78. This article criticizes the slow pace as a "stumbling block" but because of its language recommends LaFaye's novel to those who tend toward self-reflection. The article also states that the novel creates a "multidimensional portrait of a young woman in transition."

Shook, Bruce Anne. Review of Edith Shay.

School Library Journal, vol. 44 (October 1998): 138. Shook says that, although the book has a historical setting, it is more a study of character. Shook also states that, because the book is more introspective, the story will be most appealing to readers who relate to Katherine's dreams and determination.

Related Titles/Adaptations

Books featuring pioneer Wisconsin girls include Laura Ingalls Wilder's autobiographical novel *Little House in Big Woods* (1932). Novels about Wilder's mother, Caroline Quiner, as a girl in Wisconsin include Maria D. Wilkes's *Little House in Brookfield* (1996), *Little Town at the Crossroads* (1997), *Little Clearing in the Woods* (1998), and *On Top of Concord Hill* (2000), and Celia Wilkins's *Across the Rolling River* (2001).

124 Edith Shay Carol Ryrice Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn* (1935) and *Magical Melons* (1944) have a frontier Wisconsin protagonist. Brink's *Winter Cottage* (1968) portrays a Depression-era Wisconsin family that takes in runaways and strangers like the way Doreen and Aesylnn helped Katherine. Other books about teenage characters living in nineteenth-century Wisconsin include Walter and Marion Havighurst's *Song of the Pines: A Story of Norwegian Lumbering in Wisconsin* (1949), and William F. Steuber's *The Landlooker* (1991).

Although Gloria Whelan's books are set in Michigan, they share themes and characteristics with LaFaye's novel. In *The Wanigan* (2002), Annabel floats in a shack on a river when lumbermen transport logs in 1878.

Mary O'Shea assumes responsibility for her family's Mackinac Island farm in *Once on the Island* (1995) when her father leaves to fight in the War of 1812. Like Katherine, Mary leaves the farm to travel to England in *Farewell to the Island* (1998). Whelan also depicts Libby's journey from Virginia to Wisconsin in *Next Spring an Oriole* (1987) and her adjustment to living in a strange place in *Night of the Full Moon* (1993) and *Shadow of the Wolf* (1997).

The characters of LaFaye's Katherine and Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's *Judith Sparrow in Jade Green* (2000) both leave their homes to travel to unfamiliar places. Sparrow lives with strange relatives and works in a millinery while being haunted by a ghost.

Related Web Sites

<http://www.alafaye.com> Accessed August 25, 2002. This author's Web site provides some biographical information as well as brief summaries of and excerpts from the author's books.

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