

Pippi Longstocking Study Guide

Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren

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Plot Summary

Pippi Longstocking is a nine-year-old-girl who lives alone in a small Swedish village, in a home called Villa Villekulla. Her mother died when she was a baby, so her father, a sea captain, raised her and took Pippi on his many voyages around the world. During one fateful voyage, her father fell overboard during a storm and was never seen again. Convinced he is a cannibal king on an island, Pippi returns home to wait for him because she is sure he will return to Villa Villekulla one day. When leaving her father's ship, she takes a suitcase of gold coins and a little monkey, named Mr. Nilsson.

Next door to Pippi's house is another home, situated in a garden. Two children live there, Tommy and Annika, along with their mother and father. They are obedient children, but want very badly to have a new playmate. They wonder why no one lives next door, but it isn't until Pippi returns home after her father's disappearance that they realize a playmate does, in fact, live there. The two children are mesmerized by Pippi's appearance and fanciful stories, and they become fast friends.

The next morning, Pippi and her two new friends set out on an adventure to find things, because Pippi is a "thing-finder." They set out hunting around the neighborhood for objects that are of interest or value, such as a rusty jar with holes – which Pippi explains are perfect for cookies. During the scavenger hunt, the three witness a neighborhood bully and his friends picking on a small boy. Pippi goes up to the bully and wants to know why he needs to pick on the boy while in a group. The bully, Bengt, is amazed that a girl would dare interfere, and turns his attention from the little boy to her. After he attempts to shove Pippi, she uses her immense strength to pick him up and hang him on a tree branch. Then, she picks up the other bullies and sets them all over the yard – and they just stare at her in fright. Since they have nothing more to say to her, Pippi, Tommy and Annika go back to Pippi's garden.

The residents in the neighborhood are concerned about Pippi living on her own, so they decide to send two policemen to take her to a children's home. When they arrive, Pippi is confused as to why they would take her somewhere she could not bring horses or monkeys. Her constant questioning begins to annoy the officers, and they tell her she must come with them. With that, she escapes and engages in a game of tag – but the officers aren't amused. After she finds her way to the roof, the officers chase her up there, but don't have a way down. They trick her into thinking they are done with the game, but once she brings them down they try to snatch her once again. Pippi, who no longer wants to play, picks each of the officers up in either hand and walks them out to the street. Shocked, the policemen return to town to tell the residents Pippi isn't fit for a children's home, and they resolve to leave her at Villa Villekulla.

When Tommy and Annika go to school, they wish Pippi would go too, since that would make the walks to and from school so fun. They feel badly that Pippi doesn't go to school, so they decide to convince her to join them. After telling her of the vacations they get throughout the year, Pippi doesn't want to feel left out from having Christmas or summer vacation, so she agrees to go. The next day, all three go to school, and once



Pippi arrives the teacher tries everything she can to get Pippi to learn and stay on track. Pippi, with her constant stories and questions, frustrates the teacher beyond belief. Pippi captivates the students, but the teacher concludes that Pippi is too troublesome and unruly to belong in school. Pippi feels badly because she didn't realize she was misbehaving, but leaves the school and goes home for the day.

Villa Villekulla has a beautiful, but not very well kept garden, and plenty of old oak and elm trees – which are perfect for climbing. One day, Pippi, Tommy and Annika are at Villa Villekulla and Pippi suggests climbing one of the trees. Pippi is adventurous as usual, but Tommy and Annika are hesitant to climb to great heights in the tree, out of fear of falling. Pippi convinces them to join her higher up, because she found a hollow part of the stump and it is the perfect hiding place. The three gather in the stump and the secrecy of the spot makes each of them very happy.

One warm September day, Pippi decides to take Mr. Nilsson on a picnic and takes Tommy and Annika with her. After coming to the perfect spot for a picnic, Pippi sets out an entire feast for all three to enjoy. Pippi sees a tall rock over in the distance and wonders if it is hard to fly. She climbs up the rock and flaps her arms in an attempt to fly, but isn't so successful and falls to the ground. After she gets up, she finds that Mr. Nilsson has disappeared, and it makes Pippi angry. After all three split up looking for Mr. Nilsson, a bull finds Tommy and begins to charge him, but once again, Pippi uses her immense strength to get the bull away from him. After putting the bull to sleep, they find Mr. Nilsson in a tree and go home for the day.

When a circus comes to town, Tommy and Annika are very excited to go and want Pippi to join them. After explaining what a circus is to Pippi, she agrees to go. Once they arrive, the sights and sounds of the circus amaze all three children. As usual, Pippi wants to be involved in the acts, much to the chagrin of the ringmaster and women in the act. The ringmaster tries everything in his power to get Pippi to leave the circus, but she does not. Then, the Strongest Man in the World invites anyone from the audience to wrestle him for \$100. Pippi volunteers after no one steps forward, and pins Adolf down multiple times, to his embarrassment. After Pippi wins the match, she decides she is tired and takes a nap during the rest of the circus.

After her display at the circus, the entire town is aware of Pippi's strength. One evening, two tramps looking to steal something walk past Villa Villekulla, and since the lights are on, they want to go see if they may have a sandwich. Once they arrive at the door, they find Pippi in the kitchen counting all of her gold coins, and get the idea to come back and steal them when everyone goes to bed. When they come back that night, they aren't prepared to deal with Pippi, who captures and ties them up. After she finds out that one of the tramps can dance, she asks him to dance and the second tramp to blow on a comb for music. After hours of dancing and making music, the tramps are desperate to leave Pippi – and she gives each of them a gold piece because they honestly earned it.

Mrs. Settergren, Tommy and Annika's mother, throws a coffee party for the other women in the neighborhood and tells her two children they may invite Pippi so they have



something to do during the party. Pippi prepares herself for good behavior, but from the start, she aggravates and bothers all of the women at the party with her behavior and storytelling. Mrs. Settergren tells the children to take Pippi upstairs, but Pippi does not go. Tired of the bombardment from Pippi's stories, the women badly want to leave Mrs. Settergren's party and as they do, Pippi shouts out her final parts of the story.

One afternoon, Pippi is alone because Tommy and Annika have gone to a party with their parents. She rides her horse into town and finds many of the residents looking anxious and scared. The tallest house in town is on fire, and two little boys are at the top of the burning building screaming for help. The townspeople are devastated because the two boys cannot be reached, so Pippi takes it upon herself to rescue the boys with the help of Mr. Nilsson. She swings on a rope up to the building and rescues the two boys, and the townspeople cheer for her as she makes her way down from the rope.

Pippi decides to throw a small party in honor of her birthday and she invites Tommy and Annika. The two children get dressed up and bring Pippi a wrapped present, and Pippi has two presents for each of them because it's her birthday and she has a right to do what she wants. They enjoy a nice piece of cake and games, and then Pippi gets the idea to head up to the attic to visit ghosts. Tommy and Annika are frightened at first, but since they are with Pippi, they try to feel safe. After time, Tommy and Annika's father come to Villa Villekulla to bring the two children home and they leave Pippi alone, but hear her shout out that she wants to be a pirate when she grows up.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

Pippi Longstocking is a young girl who lives by herself in a house within a tiny Swedish town. The house is overgrown and sits in a garden, and has the name Villa Villekulla. Her mother died when she was a baby, and Pippi has no recollection of her. Her father, a sea captain, traveled the world and took Pippi on many adventures before he was swept overboard during a storm. When Pippi leaves her father's ship, she takes her little monkey, Mr. Nilsson, and a suitcase of gold back with her to Villa Villekulla. With the money, she purchases something she always wanted – a horse. The horse lives on the porch, but if Pippi ever wants to have afternoon coffee outside, she simply picks up the horse and sets him down into the garden. Pippi has remarkable strength, and uses it when necessary. Next door to Villa Villekulla live two young children, Tommy and Annika. These children are very obedient and get along well, but they wish there was a playmate next door. When they see Pippi, with her red hair in two braids that stick out from the side of her head, thin legs and stockings, she mesmerizes them.

When Pippi meets Tommy and Annika for the first time, she tells them of her travels, but neither child believes her stories. She invites them back to Villa Villekulla and shows them around, then makes them pancakes. After eating, she shows them many of the treasures found in the parlor and gives them each a gift to remember her. They leave at the end of the day, but both children agree to come back the next day.

Chapter 2. Early the next morning, Tommy and Annika go over to Pippi's house and they set out on an adventure to find treasures around the neighborhood. While walking around, they witness the town bully, Bengt, and four of his friends, picking on Willie, a small boy. Tommy and Annika explain that Bengt is always picking fights, and they are cowards for five ganging up on one. Pippi takes matters into her own hands, and demands to know why Bengt is picking on a lone boy. Bengt, surprised to be confronted by a girl, begins to make fun of Pippi's appearance and starts to shove her. Pippi, using her immense strength, picks Bengt up and hangs him off a tree branch, and places the other boys around the yard. The boys, now too frightened to speak, don't respond to Pippi when she asks if they have anything else to say about her appearance. Once the confrontation is over, Pippi and her two friends continue to look for treasures.

Analysis

At the beginning of the novel, the reader finds out that Pippi is an orphan because both of her parents have died. Her worldly travels have made her mature beyond her years, and the gold coins that she removed from her father's ship allow her to live by herself and make her own rules. She has two animal companions – the most important being her small monkey, Mr. Nilsson. Though she doesn't look like anyone else in the small Swedish town, her two neighbors, Tommy and Annika are accepting of her and find



Pippi's stories very interesting. Pippi's extreme strength helps her survive and live on her own – which is evident in the story when Bengt tries to pick on her. Without her strength, Pippi might otherwise be an outcast of the town and not be as able to fend for herself.

Vocabulary

overgrown, naturally, howled, inhabited, satisfaction, remarkable, disappeared, charming, threshold, introduce, thoughtfully, anxiously, skillfully, twinkling, banister, neighborhood, disappointed, doubtfully, triumphant, amazed, disdainfully, emphatically



Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3. The townspeople are concerned that Pippi lives by herself in Villa Villekulla and think children need to have someone to advise them and make sure they go to school, so they decide to send two policemen to the house to put Pippi in a children's home. When the two policemen show up at Villa Villekulla, Pippi pokes fun at them and questions the two as to why they want to put her in a children's home. She does not like that fact that the children's home does not take horses or monkeys, so she refuses to go. The two policemen are tired of Pippi's games and try to grab her, but Pippi is too fast. She thinks the policemen are playing a game of tag, so she escapes to the roof where the men can't reach her. When the police officers chase after her, they find they are stuck on the roof and need Pippi's help getting down. After tricking her into helping them, they once again attempt to capture Pippi, but she has had enough of their games. She picks the two men up, one in each hand, and places them out onto the street. The policemen return to the town and tell the concerned citizens Pippi is not fit for a children's home, and they collectively decide to allow her to live alone in Villa Villekulla.

Chapter 4. Tommy and Annika go to school, and they wish Pippi would go so they had someone to play with on the walks to and from school. Together, they decide they will ask Pippi to go to school because they feel bad she isn't included. When they tell her about school, they also mention they get Christmas, Easter and summer vacations, and after thinking about it, Pippi finds it unfair they get vacations and she does not. She agrees to go to school the next day with the two children, and the news excites Tommy and Annika.

At school, the teacher, who has heard about Pippi from people in the village, wishes to make Pippi happy while she's there. When Pippi meets the teacher, she does not behave as other children do and makes remarks and comments back to the teacher, much to the horror of the students. After multiple attempts at trying to get Pippi to engage properly in the lessons, the teacher finds herself annoyed and at her wits' end. The teacher explains to Pippi that she behaves badly, and won't be allowed to stay in school. Pippi is saddened by this news, because she didn't realize she was being unruly. She leaves the school on her horse and returns home.

Analysis

These two chapters show the contrast between how Pippi interacts with children and adults. With children, her outrageous stories and adventures are interesting and entertaining, but to adults they are simply annoying and signs of unruly behavior. Pippi just behaves the way she is – she has no idea what she says or does to adults is so bothersome, so when they tell her she behaves poorly, she is actually sorry. The manner in which she acts indicates that she is genuine and doesn't separate her



behavior for adults and children. The way children accept her shows that in general, children are more willing to believe and accept different people, whereas adults are inflexible and only do what is considered “proper” and are unwilling to take risks or have adventures.

Vocabulary

multiplication, fragrance, contrary, arranging, haughtily, embarrassing, screeching, pleasant, swinging, exercises, longingly, determined, persuade, wiggled, sternly, puzzled, absolutely, foolishness, impatiently, astonished, wildly



Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5. During a warm summer day, Tommy and Annika come over to Villa Villekulla and sit around eating pears. A young girl walks past them in search of her father, and Pippi begins to tell the girl of an experience she had on a trip to China. Tommy, Annika and the young girl are enthralled with Pippi's story, but the girl is not as believing as Pippi's friends are. She is convinced Pippi is lying, and Pippi takes offense to the accusations. When the girl recants her accusations, Pippi admits she was lying and chides the girl for being so gullible.

When the girl walks away, Pippi has an idea to climb one of the ancient oak trees in the garden of her home. Pippi, adventurous as usual, climbs higher than Tommy and Annika are willing to go, but she encourages them to climb higher because there is portion of the trunk that is hollowed. The two children put on a brave face and climb up to the hollow point, and once they reach the spot, all three are excited about finding a secret hiding spot.

Chapter 6. Another day, Tommy and Annika have a day off from school so they visit Pippi. Since it's a beautiful fall day, Pippi suggests taking Mr. Nilsson and going for a picnic. After leaving the house, they walk out through the pasture and onto a path that takes them through beautiful trees. Once they find the perfect picnic spot, Pippi sets out a feast she has prepared, complete with delicious sandwiches, pancakes, sausages and pudding. After they finish eating, Pippi spies a large rock and wonders if it is hard to fly. She decides to try and walks up to the top of the rock. She jumps, flaps her arms, and falls flat on the ground – but she is convinced she couldn't fly because she ate too many pancakes.

After the mishap, Pippi notices Mr. Nilsson is missing and it makes her very angry. The three children split up to look for the monkey, and while Tommy is out looking for him, a bull spots the young boy. Pippi takes matters into her own hands and she pulls off one of the bull's horns. The bull charges Pippi, but she jumps onto his back, which greatly annoys the bull. The bull is unable to get Pippi off his back, and he falls down in exhaustion and begins to sleep. After the excitement, they find Mr. Nilsson in a tree not far away and they all go home.

Analysis

Pippi is known for her crazy stories, but the children are not willing to believe them at first. In the interaction between the neighborhood girl and Pippi, Pippi tells of a story from one of her travels. When the girl questions the validity of the story, Pippi is insulted, but concedes that part of the story is untrue, and the girl cannot believe everything she hears. This illustrates to the reader that perhaps Pippi does not tell the truth with every



story, but the children will never know if her stories are untrue or not. When reading Pippi's stories, the reader must suspend disbelief and assume that she tells the truth – which adds to the element of entertainment and humor throughout the novel.

Vocabulary

beautiful, hurried, amazement, snug, utterly, absorbed, begged, threateningly, excellent, climb, dungeon, trembling, peeked, obediently, skipped, persuade, squeezed, experiment, exasperating, uncontrollably, ticklish, bellowing



Chapters 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7. When a circus comes to town, all of the children want to go – and Tommy and Annika are no exception. Their parents give them money to go, and they want Pippi to join them. After explaining what a circus is, Pippi is perplexed that she has to pay to go watch something, because she always looks at things but never has to pay.

When they arrive at the circus, Pippi is amazed by her surroundings. During the events, she begins to interact with the acts, much to the annoyance of the ringmaster. The ringmaster, along with the women in the circus, become very irritated at Pippi when she won't leave them alone, and once again she doesn't understand why they are mad at her. Later, the Strongest Man in the World, Adolf, makes an appearance and the ringmaster offers \$100 to anyone who will conquer Adolf in a wrestling match. No one in the audience volunteers – except for Pippi.

When Pippi comes into the ring, it infuriates the ringmaster, but he is unable to stop her. Pippi walks up to Adolf and pins him to the ground. Adolf is mortified, and continues to lose to Pippi after she pins him down multiple times. At the end of the match, Pippi refuses the money because she doesn't want an old piece of paper, and falls asleep during the rest of the circus.

Chapter 8. One evening, two tramps are walking past Villa Villekulla with the thoughts of stealing something. They see the lights are on in the house, and they walk up to the door in hopes of getting something to eat. When they arrive at the door, they find Pippi in the kitchen counting all of her gold coins, and that makes the tramps very happy. They ask Pippi if anyone else is home, and she responds only Mr. Nilsson – but they don't realize she is talking about a monkey. They leave the house and plan to come back when everyone is asleep. Once the lights go out in the house, the burglars attempt to break in and steal the coins, but Pippi captures them and tie each of them up.

When she finds out that one of them can dance, she unties the tramps and tells one of them to dance with her, while the other blows on a comb for music. She dances for hours, and each of the tramps is exhausted, but Pippi is not. The tramps beg to leave, and try to hurry out the door as fast as possible, but Pippi catches up with them. She gives each of the tramps a gold piece and tells them they honestly earned it.

Analysis

Despite Pippi's worldly travels, she has never heard of a circus or even knows what one does at such a place. She takes everything very literally, especially when Tommy and Annika explain that you pay an entrance fee to watch what goes on, and she thinks it is a ridiculous concept. While at the circus, her match with Adolf shows the entire town her strength, and many of the attendees are fascinated by her display.



The event with the tramps once again shows how her strength and innocence keeps her safe as she lives by herself in Villa Villekulla. She is not frightened when strangers come to the door, and after she uses her strength to overpower them, they become frightened by the little girl. She uses her innocence to dance with them and have fun, and rewards them with gold pieces – since that is what they came for in the first place.

Vocabulary

permission, announced, tightly, explain, foreigner, genuine, astonishment, thundering, galloped, frightened, humiliating, wriggled, sandwich, drizzling, burglar, doorknob, dawned, ordinary, gravely, shrank, prisoners, comb



Chapters 9-10

Summary

Chapter 9. One day, Tommy and Annika's mother, Mrs. Settergren, wants to invite women from the town to her home for a coffee party. She allows the children to invite Pippi so they are entertained while the adults are at the party. When the children tell Pippi of the party, she is very excited, but worried she won't behave properly. She promises the children she will take special care not to make them ashamed of her. For the party, Pippi unbraids her hair and paints her face in an effort to look presentable.

When she arrives, she screams her arrival and startles all of the women at the party. They are shocked by her presence, and Pippi goes to sit down in a chair with the other women as though she was invited to the coffee party. Pippi tries to fit in with the other women, and has terrible manners. The women, who look at Pippi with disapproval, ignore her, but that doesn't stop Pippi. Mrs. Settergren tells the children to take Pippi upstairs, but Pippi continues to tell outrageous stories no matter how hard the other women try to ignore her. At the end of their ropes, the women try to leave the house, and Pippi continues with her bombardment of stories until the very last minute.

Chapter 10. One afternoon, Pippi is alone and decides to ride her horse into town. She notices that many of the townspeople are anxious and concerned, and sees that the tallest house in town is on fire. Pippi doesn't understand why everyone is so upset, and sees that two children are up in the top floor of the burning building. She doesn't understand why the children are crying and not coming down and a man tells her it is impossible for the two boys to escape. After thinking about a plan, Pippi uses a rope and tells Mr. Nilsson to climb up a tree to toss the rope over a branch. She uses the rope to swing up and save the boys one at a time and the entire town cheers for her in gratitude.

Analysis

Pippi tries to understand that she bothers adults because when she attends the coffee party, she tells Tommy and Annika she will try to be on her best behavior. To Pippi, she is on her best behavior, but it is still not good enough by the townspeople's standards. Pippi asks Mrs. Settergren for forgiveness because she upset the others, but she continues to talk to the women until her story is complete.

The display of bravery from Pippi to rescue the boys makes the entire town grateful to her. Though they always think she has outrageous ideas, this time one of them worked to their benefit because she was able to save two children. The adults were ready to give up and not try to rescue the boys because they didn't think it was possible – but Pippi's bravery and willingness to always follow through with her thoughts made her rescue efforts successful.



Vocabulary

entertain, necessary, delightful, ashamed, fingernails, unexpectedly, gripped, stretched, decorated, dived, hastily, comfortingly, sprinkle, invite, pleasantly, imagine, mash, piano, dusk, charming, errand, enveloped, astonishment, level, untie



Chapter 11

Summary

Chapter 11. For Pippi's birthday, she invites Tommy and Annika over for a special birthday party. Tommy and Annika get ready for the party after school, and dress up for the occasion. They took money from the piggy bank to purchase a gift for Pippi and walked over to Villa Villekulla after dusk. The walk up to the house was a little frightening, since it was very dark and the trees were ominous looking. Pippi answers the front door with a low voice, and it scares Annika, who is already jumpy from her walk up to the house. Once inside, the two children feel much safer and congratulate Pippi on her special day. They give Pippi the present, which is a beautiful music box. Pippi tells them she has presents for them as well, and when they show confusion, Pippi explains it's her birthday and she can do what she wants.

After cake, Pippi wants to play games – one of which is to walk around the kitchen without stepping on the floor. Once she is tired of the game, Pippi suggests they go up to the attic and visit the ghosts. Tommy and Annika are terrified of finding ghosts, but they go anyway and decide being with Pippi is safer than being alone. When Tommy and Annika aren't looking, Pippi finds an old nightshirt of her father's and puts it on – but when the two children see a white object floating around in the darkness they think it's a ghost and become very scared.

After exploring through the attic, Mr. Settergren comes to Villa Villekulla to fetch the children. When they leave, Pippi stands at the door in her father's nightshirt, with a sword and pistol and cries out that when she grows up, she will be a pirate.

Analysis

Throwing a birthday party for herself shows that Pippi strives to have some normalcy in her life – but she still does things her way, since she wants to give out presents on her own birthday. She has a great time playing with the two children, and goes up to the attic for more adventures. She looks through her father's belongings, and finds many sentimental items.

When the two children leave, Pippi's exclamation that she will be a pirate when she grows up illustrates that she still has whimsical ideas, despite living on her own and being more mature than most children her age.

Vocabulary

addressed, understood, perfectly, recognized, sailing, struggling, smooth, lighted, completely, congratulate, scrubbed, suddenly, amazement, declared, satisfaction, dictation, objection, forehead, consoled, circumstances



Characters

Captain Longstocking

Efraim Longstocking, Pippi's father, is a sea captain. During one of his voyages, he is swept overboard during a rough storm, and presumed to be lost at sea. His wife died when Pippi was a newborn, so he spent his life taking care of Pippi and traveling the world with her. After being lost at sea, Pippi holds out hope that he is still alive, and believes he made his way to an island inhabited by cannibals, and is now a cannibal king – which makes her very proud of him. He bought Villa Villekulla many years ago, and hoped to live there with Pippi after he retired from traveling the ocean.

Pippi Longstocking

Pippi, whose full name is Pippilotta Delicatessa Windowshade Mackrelmint Efraim's Daughter Longstocking, is a nine-year-old girl living on her own in an old house with overgrown garden, known as Villa Villekulla. Her mother died when Pippi was a baby, and as a result, Pippi has no recollection of her. Her father, a sea captain, was swept overboard into the ocean during a terrible storm, but Pippi is convinced her father will come home one day.

Her appearance is remarkable to those who meet her, because her hair is as orange as a carrot and braided into two tight braids that stick out straight from each side of her head. Her nose is small and freckled, while her mouth is wide and filled with dazzling white teeth. Pippi made her dress by hand, and since there was not enough blue fabric, the dress features red patches throughout. Two stockings cover her stick-thin legs – one black and one brown, and her black shoes are two times longer than her feet.

She has immense strength, which she uses to her advantage in various scenarios. She is exasperating to adults, but her children find her fascinating because of her interesting looks and quirky stories about her travels around the world.

Mr. Nilsson

A companion of Pippi's, Mr. Nilsson is a monkey gifted to her from her father. When she leaves her father's ship after he is swept overboard, she takes Mr. Nilsson with her to Villa Villekulla. Her companion sleeps in a little green doll bed next to her bedside and wears little outfits, such as blue pants, yellow jacket and a white straw hat.

Tommy

Tommy is a young boy who lives next door to Villa Villekulla. He lives with his mother, father, and sister in an idyllic household – the children are well brought up, obedient and



display proper manners. However, Tommy wishes for a playmate and believes the house next door is empty – not realizing Pippi lives there with Mr. Nilsson. When he sees Pippi for the first time, her appearance and the monkey sitting on her shoulder mesmerize him.

Annika

Sister to Tommy, Annika is a proper little girl who takes great care in her appearance and obeys her mother and father. Though she has Tommy to play with, they both wish to have a new playmate. She is very gullible in regards to Pippi's stories, and is hesitant in taking part of the adventurous activities Pippi enjoys.

Bengt

Bengt is a local bully in the story. While Pippi, Annika and Tommy are out, they come across a young boy who is being chased by a group of five boys – the eldest and strongest of which is Bengt. Annika and Tommy tell Pippi that Bengt is always fighting and the group is cowardly because they always gang up on one person. Pippi confronts Bengt, who appears perplexed by the girl with fire-colored hair who dares tap him on the shoulder.

After making fun of Pippi to his gang of boys, Pippi does not give him the reaction he is looking for, and he shoves her. Pippi, who has tremendous strength, lifts him up, hangs him off a tree branch, and proceeds to pick up the other boys and place them on various objects around the yard. Bengt and the boys are frightened by her and remain silent when she asks if they have anything else to say about her.

Policemen

After the town decides that Pippi should not live alone, two policemen are sent to her house to take her to a children's home. She is playful with them, but they do not appreciate her humor. When they attempt to take her away, she engages in a game of tag and runs up to the roof of the house – and the policemen try to get her down. They are unable to keep up with her, and get frustrated in the process. When they pretend to give up, they try to snatch Pippi, but she will have none of it. She picks both policemen up in either hand and takes them out to the street. The policemen, who want nothing more to do with Pippi, return to town and tell the concerned citizens that Pippi is not fit for a children's home and it would be best to let her live at Villa Villekulla.

Teacher

When Tommy and Annika suggest to Pippi that she should come to school, Pippi does so only on one condition – for the vacations. When Pippi arrives at school, the teacher, who already knows about Pippi, decides to make Pippi happy while she is in school.



During the various lessons, Pippi questions everything and makes light of the lessons, which frustrates the teacher to no end. The teacher moves from lesson to lesson, trying to find something Pippi will excel at, but it is no use. As a result, the teacher thinks Pippi is a troublesome and unruly child, and does not want her in the class and tells Pippi that children as badly behaved as she are not allowed to go to school.

The Mighty Adolf

The Strongest Man in the World, the Mighty Adolf, is a wrestler who challenges anyone in the audience to meet him in the circus ring for a match. When no one comes forward, Pippi wants to wrestle him and it drives the ringmaster crazy, but she goes up to the Mighty Adolf and introduces herself. Then, without warning, she flings him onto the mat – which mortifies Adolf. The entire crowd begins to cheer Pippi on, which only adds to Adolf's embarrassment. After the match, Pippi is declared the winner and Adolf runs away as fast as possible.

Burglars

Two tramps walking around the village come upon Villa Villekulla and want to ask the inhabitants if they may have food. When they see that Pippi is in her kitchen counting all of her gold pieces, they get an idea to steal it once she and Mr. Nilsson – who they think is the man of the house – is asleep. When they come back to steal the gold, Pippi ties them up and only lets them go when she learns they know how to dance. She makes one burglar use a comb for music, and makes the other burglar dance with her until both men are exhausted. After hours of dancing, they beg her to let them leave, and she gives each of them a gold piece as they leave the house.



Objects/Places

Villa Villekulla

Villa Villekulla is the home in which Pippi lives. Her father, the sea captain, bought it before his death so he and Pippi would have somewhere to live once he retired. The home, which appears rundown, sits in a garden and has a porch – where her horse lives. The house contains many of the treasures that she finds on her adventures.

Horse

When Pippi returned to Villa Villekulla after her father was swept overboard, she used the gold pieces she took from the ship to buy a horse, because it was something she always wanted. The horse makes its home on the front porch, but should Pippi want to enjoy coffee, she picks him up and places him in the garden.

Gold pieces

When Pippi left her father's ship after he was lost at sea during a storm, Pippi took two things – her monkey, Mr. Nilsson and a suitcase of gold pieces. The gold pieces are used to purchase her horse after she arrived at Villa Villekulla, and she is seen counting them by two tramps that come to the house looking for food – but then want to steal from her.

Bed

Pippi doesn't live an ordinary life, so she shouldn't be expected to sleep like everyone else, either. She sleeps in the bed with her head at the foot of the bed, under the covers, because she says that's how they sleep in Guatemala. Her feet poke out from the top of the blankets as they rest on her pillow. Beside her bed sleeps Mr. Nilsson, in a small doll's bed.

Pepparkakor

Pepparkakor is a type of Swedish cookie. Pippi rolls out the dough for five hundred cookies on the kitchen floor, and enjoys them during afternoon coffee with Annika and Tommy in the following days.



Schoolhouse

When Pippi hears that Tommy and Annika get vacations, she feels left out and wants to go to school to feel included in such vacations. Her personality is exasperating to the teacher, but she fascinates all of the students in the classroom. At the end of her rope, the teacher tells Pippi she is not allowed in school because she is too troublesome.

Tree

In the gardens of Villa Villekulla sits many old oak and elm trees, which are perfect for climbing. One day, Pippi, Annika and Tommy are out in the garden and Pippi suggests climbing up into an oak tree. Though Annika is hesitant, all three climb up the beautiful tree and Pippi continues on to find a hollow portion of the trunk. Tommy and Annika try to be brave and reach the hollow spot, only to be amazed by the beauty and secrecy of the hiding spot.

Rock

Out on a picnic with Tommy and Annika, Pippi comes to a rock, which has a steep slope, but that doesn't deter Pippi. She wonders if it is hard to fly and resolves to try to fly from the edge of the rock. She jumps up and starts flapping her arms, but falls flat to the ground.

Circus

When the circus comes to town, Tommy and Annika convince Pippi to join them. At the circus, Pippi annoys the ringmaster and the rest of the participants in the act. When the Strongest Man in the World comes out for a wrestling challenge, Pippi volunteers and humiliates him by pinning him to the ground many times.

The Settergren's House

Mrs. Settergren throws a coffee party at her house for the women in the neighborhood, and allows Tommy and Annika to invite Pippi over so they may entertain each other and stay out of the way of the party. When Pippi arrives, she tries so hard to be well behaved, but fails miserably. After a few disasters, the other women at the gathering try to ignore her, but it becomes too much and Mrs. Settergren tells all three children to go upstairs. Pippi continues to barrage the women with her stories, and they all want to hurry away from her.



Themes

Death

Though Pippi is only a young, nine-year-old girl, she has experienced death and heartache twice with the loss of her parents. Her mother died when she was just a baby, but Pippi feels in her heart that her mother is always watching her from Heaven. She makes a point to tell her mother, “Don’t you worry about me. I’ll always come out on top.” Her father, a sea captain, was swept overboard off his ship during a storm at sea, but Pippi is convinced he is still alive and taking refuge on an island until he comes home to Villa Villekulla. At her young age, she was too young to understand the death of her mother, but she is certain her father is still alive – her unwillingness to believe he is dead likely gives her hope and optimism in her life to partake in many of the adventures she finds each day.

Though she is only nine, she acts more worldly and knowledgeable than her peers the same age, which is because her father took her around the world on his ships. She is who she is because of her father, so she is not willing to believe he is gone forever.

Strength

Pippi has remarkable strength, and displays it many times throughout the novel. She lifts her horse down into the garden, picks up policemen and moves them out of her yard, strings up bullies around the neighborhood, and beats the Strongest Man in the World at his own sport. Though much of the story is realistic about the interaction between the three children, the reader must have a suspension of belief when it comes to reading about Pippi’s strength.

Pippi’s strength allows her to take care of herself in many situations and keeps her safe. Her appearance is enough to cause the neighborhood bullies to want to pick on her, but her strength shows them she isn’t a pushover. Since Pippi is a girl, the strength she displays allows the reader to feel safe with the idea that she will be okay through any situation.

Acceptance

Though Pippi, with her fire red hair and long skinny legs, does not look like any children in the neighborhood, the children often accept her. Adults find her exasperating, which confuses her because she doesn’t feel what she says – or how she thinks – is wrong. Children are mesmerized and enthralled by her stories, but adults think she is annoying and troublesome, which goes to show that without an adult influence, children are much more accepting of those different from them.

Pippi, with her travels and experience, often appears as a source of worldly knowledge to other children and they enjoy listening to her stories – even if they are an embellishment of the truth.



Style

Point of View

Pippi Longstocking is written in a third-person point of view. The author interjects Pippi's history into the story, so the reader gets a well-rounded illustration of Pippi as an individual. This history explains Pippi's knowledge of far off countries when she recalls them to Tommy and Annika, or the adults who find her troublesome. The third person point of view allows the reader to take a step back and gather information about Pippi in order to get to know her as a character and be entertained by her personality.

In addition to the reader seeing Pippi's point of view throughout the novel, we also see the reactions of those subjected to her comments or rationalities. Since it is a children's novel, only the surface of the characters are exposed in an effort to make it easy and entertaining to read.

Setting

The novel takes place in a small village in Sweden, particularly in her rundown house, Villa Villekulla. The house, bought by her father, is located at the end of the tiny Swedish town and sits within a garden. The house features a porch, where she keeps her horse tied up, and when the horse needs to move, she picks him up and puts him into the yard. Next door, in another garden house, live her new friends Tommy and Annika.

Though there is no particular time in which the novel takes place, so it may be assumed that the fanciful story takes place at the time it was written – likely the mid 1940s.

Language and Meaning

First published in 1945, the novel was originally written in Swedish and later translated into various languages. The language of Pippi Longstocking is easy to read, as it is a children's fictional chapter book. Though the format of the story is simple to understand, the reader must develop a suspension of disbelief to accept Pippi's personality and extreme strength. The novel incorporates a handful of Swedish words and names, as the novel takes place in Sweden. The flow of the novel is fluid and each chapter begins with an adventure in Pippi's daily life.

Structure

The novel is divided up into eleven chapters, each chapter about fourteen pages long. The chapters are written in exposition and dialogue form to illustrate Pippi's history and daily life. The story contains one main plot, based on Pippi's daily existence. The reader is taken along as she engages in adventures or recounts stories from her past travels.

Through her storytelling and history, the reader is able to understand her personality and why she acts the way she does. Humor is infused into the novel, which causes the reader to be entertained by her quirky mannerisms.



Quotes

My papa is a cannibal king; it certainly isn't every child who has such as stylish papa. And as soon as my papa has built himself a boat he will come and get me, and I'll be a cannibal princess. Heigh-ho, won't that be exciting? (Chapter 1)

You are cowards. Five of you attacking one boy! That's cowardly. Then you begin to push a helpless little girl around. Oh, how mean! (Chapter 2)

Oh, I can answer all right. I'll answer like this: 'If you are so bound and determined to find out what the capital of Portugal is, then, for goodness' sakes, write directly to Portugal and ask. (Chapter 3)

In four months it will be Christmas, and then you'll have Christmas vacation. But I, what'll I get? No Christmas vacation, not even the tiniest bit of a Christmas vacation. Something will have to be done about that. Tomorrow morning I'll begin school. (Chapter 4)

No? But it's just what I'm doing. I'm lying so my tongue is turning black. Do you really think that a child can live without food from May to October? To be sure, I know they can get along without food for three or four months all right. But from May to October! It's just foolish to think that. You must know that's a lie. You mustn't let people fool you so easily. (Chapter 5)

Scrubbing vacation? Well, I like that! Another injustice! Do I get any Scrubbing Vacation? Indeed I don't, though goodness knows I need one. Just look at the kitchen floor. But for that matter, now I come to think of it, I can scrub without any vacation. And that's what I intend to do right now, Scrubbing Vacation or no Scrubbing Vacation. I'd like to see anybody stop me! You two sit on the kitchen table, out of the way. (Chapter 6)

Preserve us! It costs money to look? And here I go around goggling all day long. Goodness knows how much money I've goggled up already! (Chapter 7)

Well, what did you think he was? A lawn mower? (Chapter 8)

Don't you be too certain about that. You can be sure I'll try, but I have noticed several times that people don't think I know how to behave even when I'm trying as hard as I can. At sea we were never so fussy about things like that. But promise that I'll take special pains today so you won't have to be ashamed of me. (Chapter 9)

Untie the rope, for goodness' sake! There's another kid up here, and he can't fly either. (Chapter 10)

No, but it's my birthday, isn't it? And so I can give birthday presents too, can't I? Or does it say in your schoolbooks that such a thing can't be done? Is it something to do with that old pluttifikation that makes it impossible? (Chapter 11)



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Where are Pippi's parents? Does Pippi have a mother? Where is her father? Do you think it is a good idea for a young girl to live in a house by herself?

Topic 2

How does Pippi care for herself? Do you think she will be able to live alone as she grows up? What are your opinions about how she lives? Would you want to have complete freedom?

Topic 3

Why do you think the author gives Pippi extreme strength? Do you think it would be more believable if Pippi was a boy and had the same strength, or is it because she is a girl that the author made her that way? What type of advantage (such as flying or strength) would you want to have?

Topic 4

What is your opinion of Pippi Longstocking and her personality? Do you find her amusing as other children do, or are you annoyed by her like the adults? Do you think her world travels made her smarter? How do you explain her personality in relation to other children her age?

Topic 5

Explain why you think the author paired a child such as Pippi Longstocking with friends like Tommy and Annika. Was it done for contrast? Do you think pairing Pippi with obedient children such as Annika and Tommy made her relatable, or more outrageous?

Topic 6

Why do you think that Pippi is holding onto hope that her father is alive? Do you think it is a good idea for her to feel that way? Should she be honest with herself and come to grips with the thought that both of her parents are dead? Why do you feel that way?

Topic 7

What do you like or dislike about Pippi? Is she someone you would want to be friends with? How would a friend like Pippi affect your life? What do you think Pippi will be like when she gets older?