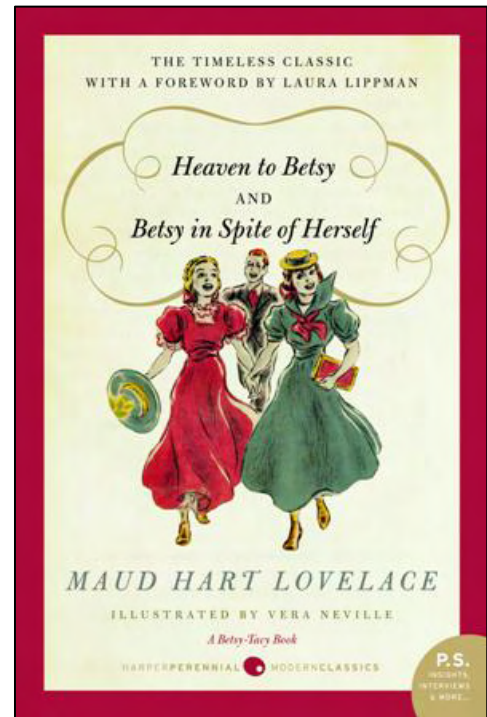


# Heaven to Betsy

By Maud Hart Lovelace

“Shep was not fooled by Betsy’s vivacity. And in spite of laughing denials, Betsy was . . . to put it mildly . . . wretchedly, desperately, nightmarishly homesick, and had been ever since she came to visit the Taggarts.” It is the summer before Betsy’s freshman year in high school, and change is in the air. The terrible homesickness, the surprise that calls her home early from the visit to the farm, and her initial encounter with Joe Willard shape the prelude to this important year.

Old and new friends, difficult school subjects, the coming together of “the Crowd,” and the mysterious Tall Dark Stranger await Betsy in the fifth volume of the series. Betsy and her widening circle of friends engage in plenty of high-jinks on their journey to adulthood but the story’s solid core remains the friendship between Betsy and Tacy.



## Chapter 1.

1. Why do you think Betsy is so devastated by homesickness? Have you ever been homesick like this? How did you handle it?
2. What does it mean to say (page 6) “the rye was in shock”?
3. Why did children have to be “old enough to be told” if a baby was expected? What does this show you about life in 1906?
4. What are “victuals” (pronounced “vittles”)?
5. What changes Betsy’s outlook drastically?
6. What do you think the surprise is? Why?

## Chapter 2.

1. Why do you think the boy in Willard’s Emporium is so amused by the Ray family customs? Do you have any customs in your own family (NOT related to holidays – just “everyday” customs?) What are some of these?
2. Describe some of the things Betsy does in this chapter to try to appear grown up.

## Chapter 3.

1. Compare and contrast the three Ray sisters
2. What keeps Betsy from asking about the surprise?
3. Do you have any special “coming home” activities after you’ve been away on a trip? Can you share them with the class?
4. What are some of the “improvements” in the new house?
5. Can you sympathize with Betsy’s feelings about the new house? Have you ever had a similar experience? How did you react? Why does Betsy act so giddy and happy?

#### Chapter 4.

1. What is a moving “dray” (page 31)?
2. Who is Ethel Barrymore? What is a “droop”?
3. What does Betsy mean when she refers to Caroline Sibley as a “stick” (page 34)?  
Why does she criticize Mr. Sibley for being a banker?
4. What is Betsy’s problem in this chapter?
5. What finally cheers her up?

#### Chapter 5.

1. Why is Mrs. Ray talking “in a choked voice”?
2. Describe Anna.
3. What does Anna’s use of the word “puny” mean? What does it really mean? What does “tony” mean?
4. What do you notice about Anna’s possessions?
5. How does Anna help Betsy with her woes?
6. Describe Miss Mix’s effect on the Ray household.

#### Chapter 6.

1. How do the McCloskeys influence life in the Ray house?
2. What are some of the “lessons” Julia and Katie have been teaching the girls about high school behavior?
3. What fights do the girls encounter on the opening day of school?

#### Chapter 7.

1. Why does Betsy change her mind (from Chapter 4) about going to the Sibleys’ side lawn?
2. What is the significance or purpose of the two school societies?

#### Chapter 8.

1. Compare and contrast Carney and Bonnie. If you could be friends with only one of them, which would you pick? Explain your choice.
2. What is a “triumvirate”?
3. Describe the changes in Betsy’s attitude and behavior as compared to that in Chapter 4.  
What are the reasons for the change?

#### Chapter 9.

1. Why is Betsy so shocked to find that Julia wants to join the Episcopal Church?
2. Compare and contrast Betsy and Julia.
3. Explain Betsy’s feelings about Julia.

#### Chapter 10.

1. What is the purpose for Betsy’s pinning starched ruffles inside her blouse?
2. See what you can find out about Anna Held, the actress.
3. What makes Betsy’s attendance at Bonnie’s party perfect? Why?
4. What is “romantic” about Bonnie’s house? Explain the meaning of “romance” as it is used here.
5. What is “Christian Endeavor”? Do you belong to any group like it at your place of worship?  
What are its purposes?

### Chapter 11.

1. Most people turn up their noses at onion sandwiches. Follow Mr. Ray's recipe and make some to share with the class. (You might want to add some mayonnaise.)
2. What is ironic about Mr. Ray's insisting that Julia play "Everybody Works But Father" at Sunday Night Lunch?
3. Do you agree with Betsy's "recipe" for how to act with boys? Why or why not?
4. See if you can find a recording of "My Wild Irish Rose" being sung by Chauncey Olcott (or another tenor) to share with the class.
5. Why do the two triumvirates disband?

### Chapter 12.

1. What are "religious exercises"?
2. Why are the young people sitting so quietly in the Sunday School room? Is this how teens behave in similar situations today? Explain your answer.
3. Describe Betsy's encounter with the Tall Dark Stranger.
4. What is Tony's evaluation of Bonnie? Do you agree? Why or why not? What is your impression of Bonnie?

### Chapter 13.

1. How does Tacy help Betsy with her self-image?
2. How does Betsy offend Joe Willard after their initial social success during the "Pass the Ring" game? What would have been a better way for her to respond to his suggestion?
3. Explain the animosity between Cab and Herbert vs. Tony in the refreshment room. How does it change?
4. What is "banter"?
5. Betsy hopes Tony will come for Sunday Night Lunch. What things does she not do to prepare for his coming? What is her reasoning here?

### Chapter 14.

1. Describe the differences between the Rays' Baptist Church and the Episcopal Church that Julia and Betsy love.
2. Why do you think Cab and Tony do not like the Rays' anniversary plans?
3. Why do the Ray girls like to hear the story of their parents' courtship over and over? Are there stories in your family that are repeated at family gatherings? Do you love to hear them often? Why is this?
4. What does Julia mean when she tells Betsy that "being married" and "being in love" are not the same thing?
5. What is an atheist?
6. How do Cab, Tony, and Herbert end the chapter satisfactorily? How do you think they came up with the idea?

### Chapter 15.

1. What is a "hen party"? Why is it called that?
2. Compare Betsy's idea of marriage with that of Carney and Bonnie.
3. What methods do the boys use to try to gain admittance to the girls' party?
4. How do the others discover Betsy's feelings for Tony?
5. How did the boys get into the shed to steal the ice cream?

#### Chapter 16.

1. What does “Hic, haec, hoc” mean?
2. Explain why Miss Clarke’s history class is so easy for the students. When Miss Clarke drops her cards and does not reassemble them alphabetically, the students recite badly. To what does she attribute this?
3. What does it mean to have a “case” on someone?
4. Explain Betsy’s feelings on her solitary walk home from Tacy’s house.
5. How can life be “painfully sweet” (page 146)?

#### Chapter 17.

1. Maud Hart Lovelace calls the McCloskeys a “legendary family.”  
What is a legend? What does this term tell you about the McCloskeys?
2. Why do you think Mr. Ray resists buying the brass bowl?
3. Mrs. Ray refers to “those new poinsettias.” See what you can find out about the history of these plants. Would they be new at this time in history (c. 1906)?
4. How does Mrs. Ray live up to Mrs. McCloskey in Anna’s opinion?  
Are you surprised at Mrs. Ray?

#### Chapter 18.

1. What is a Ouija Board? How does it worry Betsy?
2. What motive lies behind the kisses Betsy receives? How does she react? How does she romanticize Tony’s kiss? What makes his kiss different from the others?
3. Read the last paragraph of this chapter again. Then predict whether Betsy’s scorn for “trouble” is a good attitude for her to take.

#### Chapter 19.

1. How do the girls react when the Ouija Board predicts trouble for Betsy a second time?
2. Was it a good idea for Betsy to tell Bonnie that she didn’t feel romantic about anyone?  
Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think Betsy worries about Bonnie and Tony?
4. Why does Betsy nearly cry at supper (give at least two reasons).
5. How is Julia able to guess at Betsy’s feelings of worry?

#### Chapter 20.

1. Describe Bonnie’s behavior at Christian Endeavor. How does Tony react?  
To what does his reaction lead? How does the situation come to an end?
2. Evaluate Bonnie’s motives.
3. Have you ever experienced similar feelings to what Betsy has (on page 183)?  
Can you share them with the class?

#### Chapter 21.

1. Why do you think Betsy has “qualms” on the walk to the pond despite the attention she receives from Tony?
2. Describe Betsy’s woes at the pond.
3. Why do you think Tony is smoking and being so obvious about it?
4. Describe the differences in Bonnie at the pond as compared with Bonnie at Christian Endeavor.
5. How does Tacy come to Betsy’s aid?
6. What does Herbert mean when he asks Betsy if she “paints”?
7. Explain the “reforming line” that Julia talks about.

#### Chapter 22.

1. How does Betsy deal with Tony's affections for Bonnie?
2. How does she manage to flirt while her heart is breaking? Have you ever had to cover your feelings like this? Can you share this with the class?
3. Describe the reason for Herbert's "abstracted silence." Is it the same as Tony's? Explain your answer.

#### Chapter 23.

1. What are some New Year's Resolutions that you have made in the past? Do you keep them? Explain.
2. Why are Betsy and Julia so nervous about discussing their wish to become Episcopalians with their father?
3. What does it mean to "keep Lent"? Do you do this?
4. What is one of Mr. Ray's chief objections about the Episcopal Church?
5. How does Mr. Ray deal with the girls' fear of disappointing him?
6. What is the "important thing" about church, according to Mr. Ray? What does he think is the most important thing about any religion?
7. Describe and explain Margaret's actions in this chapter.

#### Chapter 24.

1. How does Julia manage to break up with Fred? Is this a fair thing to do? Can you think of a better way?
2. Why do Miss Clarke's history students do so poorly on the exam?
3. Do some research on Puget Sound. Share your findings with the class.
4. Do some research on Enrico Caruso. Share your findings with the class. Perhaps you can find a recording of his singing to share.
5. Why do you think Miss Clark coughed and "changed color two or three times" while reading Betsy's essay? Why was her compliment so strange?
6. Why do the other students suddenly become quiet when Betsy reads her essay? What can you infer about the Rhetoricals from this?
7. Explain "the Mediterranean of America."

#### Chapter 25.

1. What is a "C.F."? Do you have one? What does "confidential" mean?
2. How does Betsy feel about the Essay Contest and her Philomathian rival, Joe Willard?
3. What is Bonnie's "tragic news"?
4. What foreshadowing occurs at the end of this chapter?

#### Chapter 26.

1. What is "the vain pomp and glory of the world"?
2. How does her baptism change Betsy?
3. Mr. Ray mentions the Mormons again in this chapter (also in Chapter 23). See what you can find out about this group of people and their church.
4. Why is Joe so worried about Betsy? What does this concern lead her to believe?
5. What is the effect of Tony's actions?
6. How does the foreshadowing of Chapter 25 deepen in this chapter?

#### Chapter 27.

1. What new “blow” happens? How does it affect Betsy?
2. Compare and contrast Herbert and Betsy’s reactions to the news with that of Larry and Carney.
3. What does “spoony” mean?
4. What are “qualms”?
5. Why does Betsy walk home “slower than usual and considerably more subdued”?

#### Chapter 28.

1. What (or who) helps Betsy feel better about her chances of winning the Essay Contest?
2. What is an “indignation meeting”?
3. Betsy is “stunned” when she loses to Joe. Should she have been? Were you? Explain.
4. Why is Betsy so ashamed of herself? Have you ever felt like this? How did you handle it?
5. Explain the symbolism of Uncle Keith’s trunk and its being moved back into Betsy’s room.

#### Chapter 29.

1. Discuss Betsy’s final grades. Would you be happy with similar final marks?
2. What does Betsy discover about her feelings for Tony?
3. Explain how the Humphreys’ departure “closes a chapter “ in the lives of Betsy and her friends.
4. What are some things that make Betsy feel older?

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS BOOK:**

- Identify and explain some of the ways Betsy changes throughout the course of this book.
- Compare and contrast Betsy’s “yellow cottage” on Hill Street with the Rays’ new house on High Street.
- Choose a character (other than the Rays or Tacy) that you really liked or really disliked. Tell the class whom you chose, describe that person and give the reasons for your like or dislike.

### **WRITING ACTIVITIES:**

- Write a paragraph describing Anna.
- Think about Joe’s encounter with Betsy in the library. Write an alternative ending to the meeting that would lead to a different result: a better response from Betsy at Tony’s interrupting could lead to her leaving with Tony but with Joe’s feelings unhurt or it could lead to her leaving with Joe.
- Write a paragraph in which you describe what Joe might have been thinking during this encounter in the library.

## **DRAMA:**

- Divide into groups of three. Think about the Triumvirate of Lady Bugs and the Triumvirate of Potato Bugs. Think of a “triumvirate” name for your group. Be ready to explain the name to the class.
- With a partner, act out for the class a short scene that might have occurred between Betsy and her father after the Essay Contest. Then act out a similar scene between Betsy and her mother.



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