

A GIRL CALLED BLUE

by Marita Conlon McKenna



A Chapter-by-Chapter Comprehension Pack

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Chapter 1: Larch Hill

1. Where was Blue waiting for the Hickeys to come?
2. What preparations did Blue make before the visit of the Hickeys?
3. What evidence shows that Blue liked the Hickeys?
4. How did Blue show her anger at the failure of the Hickeys to arrive?
5. In what way did Blue show her kindness in the nursery?

Chapter 2: Molly

1. Why did Blue find it difficult to sleep in the dormitory that night?
2. How long had Blue spent in Larch Hill?
3. Why was it not necessarily correct to call Larch Hill an "orphanage"?
4. Why could Blue not be adopted?
5. Why did Blue think that the magazine was like magic?
6. Why was Molly placed in the orphanage?

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Chapter 3: Rules and Regulations

1. Why did Blue think that the daily routine in Larch Hill was a punishment?
2. Why was Saturday the worst day in Larch Hill?
3. Why did Blue and Jess get into trouble with Sister Regina?
4. What punishment did Blue and Jess receive for breaking the rules?
5. Why was everyone afraid of Sister Regina?

Chapter 4: Wet-a-Bed

1. In what way did Blue treat Molly like a little sister?
2. Describe what kind of a character Molly was.
3. Why did Blue get the nickname "Blue"?
4. Why was Molly embarrassed that morning?
5. What happened to girls who wet the bed?
6. What do you think that Molly was praying for at mass?

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Chapter 5: The Mystery Tour

1. What was special about the day in this chapter?
2. Who was in the taxi with Blue and her friends?
3. What house did they see as they passed through Phoenix Park?
4. Where was the destination for the Mystery Tour?
5. What treats did the girls get in the restaurant?
6. What was Blue's wish as she sat on the Wishing Chair?
7. What did the children do after the visit to the zoo?

Chapter 6: Getting Even

1. What did Blue hate about the mornings after Molly had wet the bed?
2. Why did Blue think that Joan and her friends wanted Molly to wet the bed?
3. Who helped Blue in her plans to get even?
4. What did Blue do to Joan?
5. Do you think that Blue was right to do what she did to Joan?

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Chapter 7: The Maguires

1. Why was it difficult for the nuns to find a family placement for the older girls and especially for Blue?
2. Why did Mary think that Blue was mad for going to stay with the Maguires?
3. Why was Blue disappointed by her initial reaction to the Maguire's farm?
4. Describe Blue's bedroom in the Maguire's house and what was her reaction to it?
5. Why did Blue have to clean the milking buckets?
6. How did the Maguire boys treat Blue?
7. Why did Blue pretend that the Maguires were a wonderful family when telling the other girls about them?

Chapter 8: Nits

1. Why did Blue complain to Mary and Lil that "it's not fair"?
2. Why were Sarah and her sister placed in Larch Hill?
3. How were the girls treated for the hair lice?
4. Why was Mary worried about her brother Tommy?

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Chapter 8: Nits (contd.)

5. Why was there silence as Sister Agnes chopped off Sarah's hair?
6. Why did Blue sit in the row behind the nuns in the chapel the next morning?

Chapter 9: This Little Piggy

1. What do think Blue thought of the way that the Maguire family spoke about her when she overheard them through the window?
2. What jobs did Mrs. Maguire get Blue to do in the house that day?
3. Why do you think that the Maguires didn't want Blue to go to the hurling match with them?
4. What disaster happened as Blue played with the piglets?
5. How did Mrs. Maguire react to Blue arriving back with the last piglet?

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Chapter 10: Trouble Trouble

1. Where did Mr. and Mrs. Maguire go the next morning after mass?
2. What did Blue do to keep busy?
3. Why was Mrs. Maguire standing outside Blue's bedroom?
4. Why was Blue called up to Sister Regina's office?
5. Why do you think that Blue decided that she didn't want to visit any other family?
6. Do you think that Blue will ever find a family to be a part of?

Chapter 11: The Beads

1. Why did Blue, Mary, Lil and Jess have to go to the workroom on four days every week?
2. Why were the six and seven year olds not allowed to make the rosary beads?
3. Why did Blue hate making the rosary beads?
4. Why do you think that Blue put some beads into her pocket?
5. What happened to one of the girls if they didn't finish their work making rosary beads?
6. Do you think that it was right for children to have to make rosary beads for three hours a day, four days a week? Why?

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Chapter 12: The Fancy Dress Party

1. What did Blue use to make her costume for the Fancy Dress Party?
2. Who wanted to dress up as a bunny rabbit?
3. Why do you think that Blue didn't want any of the others to see her outfit before the party?
4. Who were the judges for the Fancy Dress competition?
5. Why did Sister Regina not like Blue's costume?
6. What was Blue's punishment for wearing her costume?
7. In what way did Sister Monica make Blue feel better?

Chapter 13: Pictures

1. What do you think happened to Blue's magazine?
2. Why was the yellow magazine so special to Blue?
3. Why did Blue realise that she didn't need the magazine in order to see the pictures?

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Chapter 14: Summer Holidays

1. Where were the girls going for their summer holidays?
2. What agreement did Blue and Sarah make? Why?
3. In what way was the convent different from Larch Hill?
4. Which of the girls was the most comfortable in the water? Why?
5. What activities did the girls do during their week on holiday?
6. What activity did Sister Carmel and Sister Paul organise on the beach?

Chapter 15: On the Beach

1. Why was Blue filled with jealousy and envy as she looked at others on the beach?
2. What did Sister Carmel agree to on the last morning?
3. Why did nobody want to go back to Dublin?
4. Who helped in the search for the missing Jess?
5. Why did Blue find it difficult to believe that Jess was not coming back?

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Chapter 16: The Secret

1. Why did Blue want to punch and break the bones and teeth of Joan and her friends?
2. How did Blue feel about the loss of her best friend Jess?
3. Why was Blue sad that Jess's belongings could fit into a small plastic bag?
4. Do you think that Blue was right to keep Jess's money sock for herself? Why?
5. What did Blue come to realise about Jess's visitor, Eileen?
6. How do you think Eileen felt about the news that Jess was missing?

Chapter 17: The Keys

1. What job did Blue and Lil have to do? How did Blue feel about the job? Why?
2. Why did Sister Carmel rush into the laundry room?
3. What was Sister Regina's nickname? Why did it suit her?
4. Why did Blue want to get into Sister Regina's office?
5. Why was Blue familiar with the inside of Sister Regina's office?

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Chapter 17: The Keys (contd.)

6. What did Blue discover about her family in the filing cabinet?
7. Why, do you think, did Blue lie to Lil about her family?

Chapter 18: The Punishment

1. How did Sister Regina know that someone had broken into her office?
2. What punishment did Sister Regina give to Blue?
3. How did Blue try to cope with the pain in her hands?
4. Why, do you think, that Sister Regina did not want an ambulance to be called?
5. How was Blue treated by the nurse and doctor in the hospital?
6. What injuries did Blue have?
7. Why, do you think, that Blue did not want to tell how she had received her injuries?

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Chapter 19: The Infirmary

1. Why did Blue feel safe in Jimmy's arms?
2. What was Nurse Griffin's opinion of Sister Regina?
3. What did Blue discover that Sister Regina was saying about her accident?
4. Why was Lil feeling guilty about Blue's accident?
5. Why was Doctor Lynch impressed with Nurse Griffin's work?
6. In what way was Sister Monica different to all of the other nuns in Larch Hill?
7. Do you think that Sister Monica enjoyed her work in Africa? Why?

Chapter 20: Christmas

1. Why did Blue's heart sink when she opened the door to the dormitory?
2. Why, do you think, that Joan eventually gave Blue her bed back?
3. Why, do you think, that Sister Regina's face reddened when she met Blue on the stairs?
4. Who did Blue pray for during November? Why?
5. Why did Blue have to visit Nurse Griffin?

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Chapter 20: Christmas (contd.)

6. Where was Molly going?
7. How do you think Blue felt after Molly was gone?
8. What did Blue get from Santa Claus for Christmas?

Chapter 21: Cowboys and Indians

1. Why were the nuns providing entertainment for the children on this particular day?
2. Why do you think that Blue cheered for the Indians while all of the others were cheering for the Cowboys?
3. Why did Sister Regina finish the film before the end?
4. Why do you think that Sister Monica told Blue that they were both "more alike than you imagine"?
5. Do you think that Blue was right to start a fight with Joan?
6. Do you think that Blue's punishment for the fight was fair and appropriate?
7. In what way did Lil show that she was a true friend to Blue?

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Chapter 22: The Plan

1. Why had Blue thought about running away to Liverpool?
2. How did the girls know that Tommy would have to leave Larch Hill?
3. Why did Sister Carmel urge the girls to be kind to Mary?
4. What secret did Mary tell to Blue?

Chapter 23: Searching for Tommy

1. Why was the morning the best time for Blue and Mary to make their escape.
2. Why did the girls decide not to take the train to Galway?
3. Why were the girls in awe in Cleary's Toy Department?
4. What excuse did the girls agree on to tell anyone who asked them about why they were going to Galway?
5. Why did the Brothers in the orphanage not like Tommy?
6. How did Blue make her escape from the orphanage?
7. What, do you think, happened to Mary and Tommy?

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Chapter 24: Rain Rain

1. Why did Blue think that she needed to get back to Dublin?
2. Even though she had little money, why did Blue decide to take the train back to Dublin?
3. How did Blue manage to evade the train conductor?
4. How do you think Blue felt as she walked through the rain-soaked streets of Dublin?
5. How did Blue recognise Jimmy, the taxi-driver?
6. Where did Jimmy decide to take Blue?

Chapter 25: Iveagh Terrace

1. How did Nance Mooney show kindness to Blue when she arrived at the house?
2. Why did Nance initially think that they had to send Blue back to Larch Hill?
3. Why was the food that Nancy prepared for Blue better than the food at Larch Hill?
4. Why, do you think, that Blue found it easy to talk to Nance?
5. Why was Blue happy to pretend that this was her home?

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Chapter 25: Iveagh Terrace (contd.)

6. Why did Jimmy say that he and his mother would not be able to foster Blue?
7. What did Jimmy do to try to protect Blue from Sister Regina?

Chapter 26: The Cell

1. Why did Blue have to wait in the empty dormitory?
2. What did Blue find out had happened to Mary and her brother Tommy?
3. What was Sister Regina's reaction to Blue's apologies?
4. Why do you think that Blue was summoned to Sister Regina's office if she wasn't going to beat her?
5. Why did the nuns decide that Blue should sleep in a room on her own?
6. Why did Blue think that the cell "was like being in a box, a caged animal"?

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Chapter 27: The Picnic

1. Why did Blue not go away for the week's holiday in the summer?
2. How do you know that Blue was excited to see that Jimmy had come to visit her?
3. Where did they go for the picnic?
4. What did Blue and Nance do at the beach?
5. Even though Blue could not be fostered by the Mooneys, what arrangement did they propose?
6. Why did Blue know that Jimmy and Nance Mooney were "the exact people she wanted to have as a family"?

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