

Introduce yourself. Tell where you are from and where you live now. Tell how long you have lived in the U. S. and how long you plan to stay in the U.S.

### **The Secret Life of Bees, Part 3**

This author paints pictures with her words. Try to **visualize** (see in your mind) what she is describing.

**Definitions:** Most words have multiple definitions. The definition provided here is the way the word is used in the story.

**sliver:** a small thin piece (Don't get this confused with "silver".) You can ask for a sliver of cake. That would be a small thin piece. Lily wanted to know what her mother looked like. She wanted even a sliver of an image.

**tuck into bed:** pull the covers up and make them tight around you. My grandchildren like me to tuck them in at night.

**space heater:** a small heater, gas or electric for heating a small room. At my grandmother's house, there was no central heat. Every room had a small gas space heater. In earlier days, many rooms would have a fireplace to provide heat.

**generous:** plentiful If you have a generous head of hair, you have lots of hair.

**coax:** persuade

**this and that:** several different things

**scoot:** slide on your bottom in a sitting position Lily crawled into the closet and scooted to the back under the clothes that were hanging there.

**vibrate:** move rapidly back and forth My dryer vibrates when it runs. In the story, the floor vibrates when someone comes up the stairs.

**clomp:** walk with heavy steps T. Ray wears big boots, so he clomps when he walks.

**clench:** tightening part of the body You can clench your fists (teachers demonstrate). In the story, Mother's lungs clenched when she saw T. Ray.

**fury:** violent anger Fury is the root word for the word furious.

**disjointed:** not connected Lily's memories are in disjointed pieces

**The Story:** Teachers: Read each paragraph then call on a student to read the same paragraph. After each paragraph, ask the students to explain what happened in their own words.

My first and only memory of my mother was the day she died. I tried for a long time to call up an image of her before that, just a **sliver** of something, like her **tucking** me into bed, reading the adventures of Uncle Wiggly, or hanging my underclothes near the **space heater** on ice-cold mornings.

The day she died was December 3, 1954. The furnace had cooked the air so hot my mother had peeled off her sweater and stood in short sleeves, jerking at the window in her bedroom, wrestling with the stuck paint. Finally she gave up and said, "Well, fine, we'll just burn the hell up in here, I guess."

*1-Why did Lily's mom peel off her sweater?*

*2-What does the author mean by "jerking at the window" and "wrestling with the stuck paint"? Do you have a mental picture of this?*

Her hair was black and **generous**, with thick curls circling her face, a face I could never quite **coax** into view, despite the sharpness of everything else. I raised my arms to her, and she picked me up, saying I was way too big a girl to hold like this, but holding me anyway. The moment she lifted me, I was wrapped in her smell.

*1-Lily is frustrated that she remembers lots of things about that day, but can't clearly remember what her mother looked like. Have you ever had this experience of not clearly remembering what someone looked like once they died?*

*2-Smell is a powerful memory tool. We remember smells. Lily remembers how her mother smelled, even though she can't remember how she looked. Do you have any smells stored in your memory?*

The afternoon my mother died, there was a suitcase open on the floor, sitting near the stuck window. She moved in and out of the closet, dropping **this and that** into the suitcase, not bothering to fold them.

*1-The author doesn't tell us that Lily's mother was packing hurriedly. But do you feel like she's hurrying? Is there a word or phrase that makes you think she is in a hurry?*

I followed her into the closet and **scooted** beneath dresses and pant legs, into darkness and wisps of dust and little dead moths, back where orchard mud and the moldy smell of peaches clung to T. Ray's boots. I stuck my hands inside a pair of white high heels and clapped them together.

The closet floor **vibrated** whenever someone climbed the stairs below it, which is how I knew T. Ray was coming. Over my head I heard my mother, pulling things from the hangers, the **swish** of clothes, wire clinking together. "Hurry!" she said.

*1-When we read these paragraphs, we feel tense and a little bit afraid that something bad is going to happen. What phrases make us feel this way?*

*2-Wisps of dust are little pieces of dust. If you look under your bed, or in the back of your closet you might find wisps of dust.*

When his shoes **clomped** into the room, she sighed, the breath leaving her as if her lungs had suddenly **clenched**. This is the last thing I remember with perfect crispness---her breath floating down to me like a tiny parachute, collapsing without a trace among the piles of shoes.

I don't remember what they said, only the **fury** of their words. How the air turned raw. Later it would remind me of birds trapped inside a closed room, flinging themselves against the

windows and the walls, against each other. I inched backward, deeper into the closet, feeling my fingers in my mouth, the taste of shoes and feet.

*1-Lily tells us that the last thing she remembers perfectly is her mother releasing her breath. After that she just remembers images or pieces. Do you have memories from when you were a small child that aren't very clear?*

*2-How is Lily feeling when her parents begin to argue?*

*3-Did your parents argue much? Did it scare you when they argued?*

Then I felt myself being dragged out. I didn't know at first whose hands pulled me, then found myself in my mother's arms, breathing her smell. She smoothed my hair said, "Don't worry," but even as she said it, I was peeled away by T. Ray. He carried me to the door and set me down in the hallway. "Go to your room!" he said.

"I don't want to," I cried, trying to push past him, back into the room, back where she was. "Get in your damned room!" he shouted, and shoved me. I landed against the wall, then fell forward onto my hands and knees. Lifting my head, looking past him, I saw her running across the room. Running at him, yelling. "Leave. Her. Alone!"

*1-How do we know Lily's mother is trying to protect her?*

*2-How does T. Ray react to Lily's mother picking her up?*

I **huddled** on the floor beside the door and watched through air that seemed all scratched up. I saw him take her by the shoulders and shake her, her head bouncing back and forth. I saw the whiteness of his lip.

And then, though everything starts to blur now in my mind, she lunged away from him into the closet, away from his grabbing hands, scrambling for something high on a shelf.

When I saw the gun in her hand, I ran toward her, clumsy and falling, wanting to save her, to save us all. Time folded in on itself then. What is left lies in clear yet **disjointed** pieces in my head. The gun shining like a toy in her hand. How T. Ray snatched it away and waved it around. The gun on the floor. Bending to pick it up. The noise that exploded around us.

This is what I know about myself. She was all I wanted. And I took her away.

*1-Lily's memory is disjointed. She remembers the gun in her mother's hand. Then she remembers T. Ray grabbing it and waving it around. Then she remembers the gun on the floor. She remembers picking it up. She remembers a loud noise. But her memories are disjointed. Do you think Lily really shot her Mother?*

*2-Lily says, "Time folded in on itself..." Have you ever felt like Tom stopped and things moved in slow motion? For example, years ago when my boys were small, my husband and the boys were in our car driving into town. I was following behind in my car. A car came sliding across*

*the road and hit my husband's car head on. Pieces of the car flew up into the air. When everything stopped moving, there were car parts all over that road and my husband's car was totally smashed. I didn't know if my husband and boys would be alive or not. Time stopped for me then. I felt like everything moved in slow motion.*