

Fatty legs

Introduction:

Pre-reading - discussion or individual response.

1. Why do you go to school?
2. Would you go to school if you didn't have to?
3. What does the word education mean to you?
4. What kind of qualities do you think a teacher should have?
5. What does it mean to be an outsider?
6. What does your family have to do if they need food or supplies?
7. What do you really wish you knew how to do?
8. Do you think a person needs to be brave to be curious? Explain.
9. Why do you think that this book is called "Fatty Legs"?

Chapter 1

1. Why did the outsiders "pluck" the students from their homes?
P. 3 to take them to school in Aklavik
2. When most of us want or need something we will often just go to the store to get it. What did Olemaun and her family have to do to trade and get supplies?
P. 3 "five-day journey to Aklavik with my father, across the open ocean, past Tuktoyaktuk, and through the tangled Mackenzie River delta, to buy supplies."
3. What did Olemaun think was the key to the outsiders' mysteries and who did she think held it?
P. 4 the French Canadian and Belgian Priests held the key, reading
4. Why do you think Rosie, Olemaun's half-sister, would not share anything about her four years at school?
Responses will vary p. 4
5. Why did Olemaun think Alice was chasing the rabbit? Why do you think she had a hard time understanding?
P. 5 Olemaun thought that Alice was chasing the rabbit to hunt it. Responses will vary.
6. Do you think that Alice was brave to chase the rabbit?
7. What does Olemaun think it must have been like at the outsiders' school? After persisting what does Rosie say about the school?
P. 6-7 Olemaun thinks it must have been exciting. Rosie says that they will cut their hair since their mothers weren't there to braid it, they want all of their time for chores and kneeling on your knees to ask for forgiveness and that they would take everything.
8. What does it mean to take everything?
Responses will vary p. 7
9. Why do you think that Olemaun's father told the outsiders "no" the previous four summers when they had come for her?
Responses will vary p. 7
10. Why do you think that the outsiders want to take the children?
Responses will vary p. 7

11. When did this book take place?

P. 7 first date mentioned was the end of February 1944

12. How did Olemaun's family travel?

P. 7 by dogsled

13. When Olemaun's father told her no how did she respond? How do children these days often respond when their parents say no?

P. 8. When Olemaun's father said no she, "cringed under the cold flash of defeat" but was CAREFUL not to talk any further about it. Instead she held it inside for months.

14. What does Olemaun's father tell her about the schools and the outsiders?

P. 10 They do not teach you how to hunt and use your knowledge of making snares and send you to collect from their trampolines for their own profit. They don't teach you how to cure meat and clean fish so you can live off the land. They feed you cabbage soup and porridge and don't teach you to make parkas and Kamik. They make you wear their scratchy outsiders' clothes, which keep out the Mosquitos nor the cold. They teach you their songs and dances instead of your own and they tell you that the spirit inside of you is bad and needs their forgiveness.

15. How does Olemaun feel about the outsiders' songs and dances compared to her own?

P. 11. She thought that the outsider's songs were beautiful chants and dreamed of making that kind of music. She thought that she could never forget her songs and dances because they were a part of her.

16. Olemaun has heard that she would be asked to kneel and pray for forgiveness a number of times, what does she think about that?

P. 11. She thinks that she will be careful of stay out of trouble and no one will say that she had to kneel and ask for forgiveness and they would see that her spirit was good.

17. Why do you think that Olemaun is not bugging her father about going to the school?

Responses will vary

18. What quality does Olemaun possess that her father says the outsiders don't like? Why do you think this is the case?

P. 13 they don't like stubborn children. Responses may vary

19. At the end of Chapter 1 Olemaun's father uses a rock to demonstrate the change that will happen to her at the school. What comparison does he make and what is the significance? Does Olemaun "get" his message?

P. 13 he shows her a round rock and explains that it used to be jagged and full of sharp, jutting points. He says that the water of the ocean slapped and slapped at it, carrying away its angles and edges and now it is nothing but a pebble - that is what the outsiders' school will do to you." Responses will vary. It could be argued either way, for example she is bright in saying that she is a rock, not a girl and that the weather did not change the stone inside the rock.

20. Why does Olemaun's father finally agree to let her go to the school?

P. 14 he felt that since she was persistent he would give in so it would be done.

CHAPTER 2

Pre reading:

1. Have you ever gone on a long trip anywhere? Where did you go? How did you travel? How long did it take?

2. As a child I always felt like Costco was a pretty fantastic place. If you have ever been there what did you like about it?

1. At the beginning of Chapter Two Olemaun describes her family's spring migration. How many schooners were traveling with them? How many families were on each schooner? How many days was the trip?

P. 17 Six schooners with six or seven families, it was a five day trip.

2. Who owned Olemaun's schooner and why was it significant?

P. 17 it was owned by Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Wolki and had been part of the famous Stefansson expedition's fleet.

3. Who was Old man Pokiak and why was he significant?

p. 18 He was Olemaun's great-grandfather and he founded the trading post that they were at

4. What was Olemaun playing with after her father sold his winter catch of furs?

P. 18 a caribou hide ball

5. What place did Olemaun feel was magical and why?

P. 19

The Hudson's Bay Company - they sold everything a person could ever need from furniture to ladies dresses, from rifles to candy.

6. What did Olemaun's mother say to her to try to convince her not to go to school?

P. 19. The nuns will cut your hair, make you work even harder than when you help your father, they will not be kind to you, they are not your family and they are not like us.

7. Why does Olemaun think her mother wants her to stay home from the school? Do you think that Olemaun is correct in her thinking?

P. 19 She thought that her mother seemed to know a lot about a place that she had never been and that she was trying to scare her. She thought life would be more difficult without her there to help her with the smaller children and that she was likely jealous of her opportunity to learn to read. Answers may vary

8. What things does Olemaun's mother buy her at the Hudson's Bay Company?

P. 20 some strange smelling soap, a comb to keep her hair neat, a toothbrush, something strange smelling in a tube and a pair of gray stockings.

9. What do you think was in the white tube that Olemaun's mother bought her?

P. 20 answers will vary, likely answer should be toothpaste

10. Olemaun's parents wanted to wait until after the first of July to send her to school, what was important about this date and what took place on that day? What reasons does she give for that day being a festive time?

p. 21 it was Dominion Day and the athletic games took place. July was a festive time for these groups because they were freed from the ice and would go to Aklavik for supplies and to compete in tests of strength.

11 Why do you think that Olemaun thought the kids in the garden were "naughty"?

P. 22 Answers will vary

12. What was Olemaun playing with on the first day of the games?

P. 22 a ptarmigan balloon

13. Why do you think that Olemaun thought the kids in the garden were "naughty"?

P. 22 Answers will vary

14. Why do you think that the children who got off the boats were feeling so solemn and, as Olemaun's mother said, "didn't want to go to the outsiders' school"?

p. 23-24 Answers may vary

15. Why do you think that Olemaun's mother's words stung?

(p. 24) She was hurt because she felt that Olemaun would rather go to the school than be with her family.

16. Olemaun thinks it will be fun to work at the hospital like a nurse. Do you think it would be fun? What kind of things do you think Olemaun will have to do as a "nurse"?

P. 24 Answers may vary

17. Why do you think that Olemaun will not be allowed to talk to the boys, even if they are her cousins?

P. 25 Answers may vary

18. Why was the school staring to seem less inviting?

P. 25 Answers may vary, should include: it is large, her family wasn't around, she will miss the comforts of her home like sleeping under her father's bed or smelling/seeing his pipe.

19. Do you think that Olemaun should have changed her mind about going to the school? Why or why not? Make a prediction about what would happen if she goes to the school. Make a prediction about if she was to go home.

P 26 Answers may vary

20. Why does Olemaun decide that she should go to the school?

P. 26 she feels like she can manage, that she could just read herself to sleep like Rosie did and she was very excited to go to school.

21. How long does Olemaun say she stays at the school for and why?

P. 26 "the ice that allowed my people to travel only in the brief weeks of summer would keep me from going home...an unusually short summer in 1945 would hold me prisoner for a SECOND year."

22. What do you think that Olemaun meant when she said that the "Sisters, the Fathers and the Brothers...were not family; they were like owls and ravens raising wrens?"

P. 26 Answers may vary

23. What do you think that the hooked nose outsider meant when she told Olemaun's father that, "you certainly can't teach her the things she needs to know." p. 28

24. What kind of imagery is recurring by the end of Chapter two?

A lot of similes and metaphors regarding birds – FNMI perspective

CHAPTER 3

1. What did the nuns do to most of the girl's hair? Why do you think they did this?

p. 31 they sever their hair – answers may vary but her sister said it was because the nuns don't want to have to braid the younger girl's hair.

2. What is the significance of the word "sever"?

P. 31

Divide by cutting or slicing, esp. suddenly and forcibly.

Put an end to (a connection or relationship); break off

3. Why do you think that the nuns cut Olemaun's hair? P. 31

Answers may vary

4. How did Olemaun know that the tall girl who entered the room was Gwich'in?

P. 32 by the wraparound moccasins that she wore

5. What did Olemaun think about the clothes that she was given? What were some of the items?

P. 32 she said that they were impractical. They had to exchange their warm, comfortable kamik and moccasins for outsider-shoes and issued each girl a short-sleeved blouse and two pinafores, one navy blue and one khaki. They were given scratchy canvas bloomers, "they expected us to wear underwear made out of the same stuff that tents were made of. They knew nothing of living in the North, nor how to dress for it."

P. 34 the clothes did not fit well. The shoes were too small and pinched. The bottoms were hard and stiff and did not form to the shape of a foot like she was used to and there was no padding. The faded, black second hand stockings were as transparent as walrus intestines and much too small and didn't reach the elastic bottoms of Olemaun's bloomers so they wouldn't stay up.

6. Olemaun said that the nuns, "knew nothing of living in the North, nor how to dress for it." p. 34. What kind of education do you think the students will be receiving since it clearly wouldn't be about the north?

Answers may vary

7. What was the nun's reaction when Olemaun tried to wear her own stockings? Why do you think she reacted this way?

P. 35 she snatched them away and asked Olemaun, in her own language, just who she thought she was.

8. How do you think Olemaun felt about her name? How could you tell?

P. 35 she was proud, she puffed up her chest as she said it.

9. What did Olemaun's name mean and where did it come from? What is her new, Christian name?

P. 35 her grandfather named her that after his Alaskan-Yup'ik mother and it meant the hard stone used to sharpen an ulu. Now she is Margaret.

10. What did Margaret discover about the stuff in the tube? What did she say it tasted like?

P. 36 she found out that the "toothpaste" was actually shaving cream. She said that it tasted like a fly's breakfast.

11. Why did Margaret feel that the girls were laughing at her mother?

P. 37 her mother bought the shaving cream by mistake because she couldn't read but she had good intentions.

12. Why did Margaret decide to try the new nun's toothpaste?

P. 38 she trusted her smile and the nun tried it first and said "mmm"

13. What was the new nun's name and what did Margaret think she looked like?

P. 38 Sister MacQuillan and she was like a swan

14. Margaret was hoping to learn to read on her second day, was did she learn instead?

P. Margaret learned that the honey buckets, buckets used as toilets, would be carried down the stairs by them to be carried across the school yard to be dumped in the river.

15. What was Margaret supposed to pray for on p. 42? What does she pray for instead?

Her soul but she prayed for class to start soon

16. Do you think the Raven is picking on Margaret? Explain your answer
Answers may vary

Chapter 4

1. What did the Raven want Margaret to do at the beginning of chapter 4? Was this fair? Explain.
P. 46 she wanted her to read. Most should say unfair because by this time most of the girls knew a few phrases in English but basically followed the cues from the older girls. Answers may vary

2. Why did the kids laugh when the Raven made Margaret clean the boards?
P. 48 she said that cleaning the boards should be no problem for her because she was so tall her stockings wouldn't even stay up.

3. What did Margaret decide that she would teach the Raven? How do you think that she planned to do that?
P. she had something to teach her about the spirit of the Inuvialuit. Responses for part 2 may vary.

4. How did Margaret feel about the food they were feeding the kids at school?
P. 50 made the kids ill, now they ate it because they were starving. It made her angry to eat the meatless mush - her father's sled dogs wouldn't have licked the bowl it was put in.

5. Why did the hatchlings start laughing at the Raven?
P. 50 because the Raven grabbed Margaret's arm and Margaret dumped the bowl of oatmeal all over the Raven

Chapter 5

1. Margaret eventually turned the Raven's cruelty into a game. How did she "play"?
P. 52 she practiced harder at reading, writing and arithmetic than any other girl in the class and chose to do during recreation time.

2. What news did Margaret receive when a boat delivered a letter from her father? Explain
P. 53 she found out that the North Star and other schooners had not made it home to Banks Island the previous summer and had been stranded on a small island by an early freeze. The hunting and trapping was not as successful so the groups decided to do their trading in Tuktoyaktuk instead for fear of being caught in the ice again.

3. Why do you think that Margaret had the dream about being locked beneath the Raven's habit?
Answers may vary

4. What reasons does Margaret give for the nuns wanting to keep the children at the school?
P. 55 "it wasn't just the chores, they were paid by the government per student and plucking us from our homes and keeping us in their nests was a money making business."

5. Why did classes have to be halted in October?
P. 55-56 "the whole of the North seemed to come down with a sickness called smallpox, and the hospital filled to capacity...we worked around the clock with the nuns and the men who were hired to do the chores that we children could not do."

6. What did Margaret think about having to call the men who were hired to do the chores the children couldn't do Brothers?
P. she felt that they were far from family and thought that some of them probably didn't even believe in God.

7. Why did Margaret stop complaining about the work?

P. she was grateful not to have smallpox since many of the other children came down with it.

8. What happened to Margaret when she had to go to the bathroom when she was working in the hospital? Explain

P. 58 she had to sneak out to go and a Brother scared her so she wet herself. When the Raven found out she called her filthy and left Margaret out on the front lawn shivering with a bucket of hot soapy water to clean her underwear as the other girls watched from the window.

9. By late November when classes resumed Margaret said that she discovered that Rosie was right about something, what was it? What does Margaret say that she would have done instead? Why do you think Margaret said what she did?

P. 60 she discovers that Alice was not hunting the rabbit after all and says that she would have brought its pelt back for her father.

10. What did Margaret want to tell her father inner letter home? What happened to the letter instead?

P. 60-62 she wanted to tell her father about what she had learned and the books she had read and that she wanted him to come for her when the sun returned to melt the ice. Instead the nuns were going to dictate the letter. Margaret told about how she felt at school, the Raven took her letter and in the end she wrote no more than Dear Mother and Father.

11. After the issues with the letter what did Agnes tell Margaret she overheard two nuns talking about? Do you think Margaret would get the chance to share her message? What would you say if you had this opportunity?

P. 63 Agnes heard the nuns say that next week they would be going to CHAK to broadcast a message to their parents. Answers to parts 2 and 3 may vary.

12. Did the nuns worry about the health or safety of the children on the way to the station? Why or why not, explain.

P. 63 they took the kids to the station, three weeks before Christmas dressed inappropriately. Answers will vary

13. What message was to be sent home this time? Why did Margaret think that this didn't make any sense? Why do you think the nuns wanted the children to do this?

P. 63 "Hello, Mom! Hello, Dad! Merry Christmas! I miss you, but the nuns here treat us like family and school is very fun. Margaret thought it was silly since many of the parents couldn't speak English and wouldn't understand the false praise anyway. Answers for part 3 will vary.

14. What did Margaret think her silence would accomplish?

P. 64 she figured that since she never stopped talking at home her silence would tell them that something was wrong.

Chapter 6

1. How did the Raven make Margaret pay for her silence at the station?

P. 65 by making her clean the chicken coops

2. What was different about the stockings the Raven gave to Margaret? Why do you think she did this?

P. she gave her a pair of bright red stockings that made her legs look even bigger than they were.

Answers will vary for part 2

3. Who did Margaret imagine the Raven as after she got her new stockings? Do you think this is an appropriate comparison? Why or why not?

P. she imagines her as the Queen of Hearts; answers will vary.

4. What punishment does Margaret receive after Katherine called her fatty legs and Margaret called her fatty face?

P. 68 she has to tend to the laundry for the rest of the week

5. What do you think Margaret plans to do to stop "this fatty legs business"?

Answers will vary but hopefully will make a connection to the fire and sizzle.

6. What happened to Agnes after everyone started calling Margaret fatty legs?

P. 69 the other girls started calling her skinny legs and Agnes pulled away a little bit.

7. What did Margaret do with the stockings? Do you think this was a good or bad idea? Explain.

P. she put them in the fire below the pot to boil the laundry. Answers will vary but hopefully they will consider that the stockings would be gone for good.

8. How did the Raven react when Margaret came into the refectory with bare legs?

P. 70 she flailed like a fish on ice when she noticed my bare legs, and threw her hands in the air. She was furious that Margaret was in appropriately dressed and insisted she put her stockings on.

9. How do you think Margaret felt when she told the Raven she couldn't put on her stockings?

Answers will vary, brave, empowered, proud...

10. What do you think Sister MacQuillan whispered in the Raven's ear and what did Margaret think would change as a result?

Answers will vary, she knew the Raven wouldn't be free to "educate" her as much as she had been.

11. What lesson does Margaret think that the Raven learned by the end of Chapter 6?

P. 74 "Be careful what birds you choose to pluck from their nests. A wren can be just as careful as a raven."

Chapter 7

1. What did Margaret fear at the beginning of the chapter and what message was delivered to her at the beginning of the summer?

P. 75 she was worried that her parents would forget about her and she could never escape. She received a letter saying that her family wanted her to travel to Tuktoyaktuk with a school boat where they would meet her early.

2. How long had it been since Margaret heard her real name?

P. 77 2 years

3. What is the Inuvialuit word for swan? How did Sister MacQuillan react when Margaret called her a swan?

P. 77 the word is Qugyuk and Sister elongated her neck and raised her arms like she would take flight.

4. Margaret says that she was sure that once she told her father about the Raven that she was sure he would never let her return to the school. Do you think she will ever go back? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary

5. What was the name of the boat that took Margaret to Tuktoyaktuk?

P. 78 it was a Roman Catholic boat called the Immaculata.

6. How did Margaret's mother react when they first saw one another? What did she say to the Brothers?

P. 79 Margaret's mother didn't know her and told the Brothers, " Not my girl."

7. What did her mother give to Margaret as a welcome home gift?

P. she had brought her a package of all the things Margaret liked to eat before she went to school.

8. How did Margaret feel about (react to) the gift?

P. 81 the food was strange and difficult to eat. It felt greasy and was salty, with a strong smell. She wasn't sure if she could ever be able to eat it.

9. Margaret's parents had very different reactions to Margaret's aversion to the foods. Explain the reaction from both and why you think each reacted as they did.

P. 81 Margaret's mother cried and called her an outsider. She wanted to stop at the Hudson's Bay store in Tuktoyaktuk on their way back to camp to buy her some outsider food. Margaret's father laughed and said that Margaret was still Inuvialuit and that she would eat when she got hungry enough.

Answers will vary but hopefully students will make the connection that Margaret's father had a different reaction because he had likely gone through something similar when he returned from the school.

10. What do you think that Margaret meant when she said that she was, "satisfied that I now knew what happened to girls who went down rabbit holes."?

P. 82 answers will vary

11. What do you predict will happen after Margaret settles in at home? Give reasons for your answer.

AFTER THE STORY

1. What things did Margaret do in the first year of her return home?

P. 83 she hunted with her father, fished with her mother, looked for goose eggs with her siblings

2. What happened to Margaret's younger sisters after her return? Are you surprised? Why or why not?

P. 83 they grew very curious about the school and bugged her dad to let them go.

3. Why did Margaret's father agree and how did the government help his decision?

P. the girls bugged him because they wanted to learn and the government made school attendance a condition for receiving child benefits.

4. What things did Margaret say to the girls to try to talk them out of their decision?

P. 84 she said that their hair would be cut, they would have to do many chores and kneel on their knees to ask for forgiveness.

5. What did Margaret decide to do and why? Would you have made the same choice? Explain.

P. 84 she decided to go with the girls to school to protect them "to make sure that they didn't forget that wrens can be just as clever as ravens and owls."

6. Why do you think that Margaret names Sister MacQuillan but refers to the nun who was cruel to her as "The Raven"?

Answers will vary but Sister MacQuillan was kind to her so she wanted to share her name. "The Raven" was actually a combination of people who treated Margaret poorly but there was one who was worse than all of the rest. Margaret says that she did not use The Raven's real name because it is too painful.

7. Throughout the novel Margaret is seeking an education. What do you think she really learned in this story? Explain.

Answers will vary.

8. In the beginning of the book Margaret said that she thought Alice was brave to chase the rabbit out of curiosity. Do you think Margaret was brave? Explain.

Answers will vary.

THE SCHOOLS

1. How did some of the children end up coming to the schools and why did they want to keep enrollment high?

P. 86 some went willingly hoping for preparation for a changing works where most were forcibly taken or kidnapped. They wanted to keep enrollment high because they were paid a fee for each child at school.

2. What were some of the problems mentioned in this section about the schools?

P. 86 schools were often overcrowded and dirty and diseases such as tuberculosis were common. Teachers were often unqualified to educate the children in their care.

3. What does it mean to assimilate? How did the schools try to do this to the children?

Clothing taken away, hair was cut, not allowed to use their own language. "The schools were meant to strip generation after generation of children of their culture and skills." They returned home as outsiders who could not communicate with their families.

4. What problems did some of the children experience when they returned from school?

P. 86-87 they were frequently considered outsiders and could not speak their parents' language and had lost the knowledge of the old ways. Many were abused at school which takes generations of healing. They had to parent their own children without having experienced what it was like to have parents.

5. What are the people who lived through their experiences at residential schools called?

P. 87 survivors

6. What are some of the ways that former residential school students are trying to heal?

P. 87 seeking peace through healing circles, relearning their languages, participating in cultural celebrations like traditional athletic games and powwows that showcase traditional dances, drummings, songs, and handicrafts as well as through sharing their stories, philosophies, and inspirations in all forms of art and media including books.

Post reading questions:

Why do we call "comfort food" comfort food? What kinds of things do you consider comfort foods? How would you feel if you couldn't eat your favorite foods anymore because they had been taken away from you for so long?