Kathleen Stafford

LSW—Bridge to Terabithia

**1. What role does gender play?**

Gender plays quite a big role in the book. Jess’ family has the stereotypical gender roles within the family. The women stay home and raise the kids and take care of the house. The men go to work and take care of the physical labor. It doesn’t seem like the sisters do much of anything, whereas Jesse is left to do all the physical work while his father is away at work. There’s also clear lines drawn at school. The boys have their running competitions and king of the hill games, while the girls stay separate.

In Leslie’s family, the gender lines are blurred. Both her parents are successful authors, the text even states that the mother is the more successful of the two. Leslie doesn’t feel the need to abide by the gender rules, because she wasn’t raised in that sort of environment.

**2. Why do Jess & Leslie create Terabithia?**

They come from two different worlds, neither one feeling comfortable in the other’s world or having the other in their world. Jess feels uneasy at Leslie’s house and feels his family acts funny while she’s at his house. Jess is from a world where money is worked hard for, while Leslie’s family doesn’t know what it means to worry about money. Both long for an escape from their everyday lives. They create Terabithia to be their safe haven. Away from everybody and everything. A world of their own, where it’s OK for them to be friends without the judgment of others. A place where it’s OK for a boy and girl to be friends, where gender roles don’t matter, where it’s OK for Jess to draw, just a safe place for their imaginations to run wild and be who they want to be. A sanctuary.