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# Heidi

**Johanna Spyri** · *1880 (Stork trans. 1919)* · *Elisabeth P. Stork translation (1919)*

An orphan is taken up the Alp to a grandfather who has withdrawn from the village. The mountain teaches her joy; Frankfurt teaches her homesickness. Spyri's book is about prayer, the church bells, and a child who cannot thrive away from the place and the people she loves.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## When a child is moved from the Alp to a fine house in Frankfurt, what does she still owe to her grandfather, to prayer, and to the people who are poor and blind in the village below?

*"If you have a sorrow that you cannot tell to anyone, you can go to Our Father in Heaven."*

**the grandmother in the village** · When she teaches Heidi to pray

Heidi loves the Alm-Uncle into warmth, and she loves the blind grandmother. In Frankfurt she cannot rest; she wails to go home, and she nearly stops praying when the answer seems slow. The grandmother's counsel, and the Sesemanns' eventual mercy, send her back. Later she is able to be a blessing to Clara and to a doctor. The grandfather, hearing the church bells, is drawn toward God and the village again.

KEY CHARACTERS

**Heidi**
*An open-hearted child of the mountain, who pines when she is cut off from home and prayer.*

**the Alm-Uncle**
*Heidi's grandfather; severe and isolated at first, then softened and turned toward the village.*

**Peter**
*The goat-boy, a rough friend, later jealous of Clara.*

**the grandmother**
*Blind, poor, and faithful; she teaches Heidi to pray and is Heidi's first care.*

**Clara Sesemann**
*The sick girl in Frankfurt who becomes Heidi's friend and later a guest on the Alp.*

**Miss Rottenmeier**
*The stiff housekeeper who cannot understand a mountain child.*

**Grandmama Sesemann**
*Clara's grandmother, wiser and kinder than the household's rules.*

**Dete**
*Heidi's aunt, who leaves her on the Alp and later takes her away for her own convenience.*

TELL HIM EVERYTHING

> *"If you have a sorrow that you cannot tell to anyone, you can go to Our Father in Heaven."*
>
> **the grandmother** · Teaching Heidi to pray

> *"Oh, I want to go home. What will poor Snowhopper do without me?"*
>
> **Heidi** · In Frankfurt

**Grades 3–5**
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

### Going Up to the Alm-Uncle

CHAPTERS I–IV

*Dete leaves Heidi with the old man on the mountain. Heidi takes to the pasture, the goats, and Peter, and she visits the blind grandmother in the hut below.*

- The Alm-Uncle is rough, isolated, and not used to a child; Heidi is not afraid of him.
- The pasture, the eagle, and the sunset become her delight.
- The grandmother's poverty and blindness first open Heidi's pity.

02

### Taken to Frankfurt

CHAPTERS V–XI

*Dete fetches Heidi to be a companion to Clara Sesemann. Miss Rottenmeier's household is stiff; Heidi's ways are a disturbance, and the child begins to pine.*

- Clara is a gentle invalid in a rolling-chair, glad of a friend.
- Heidi's attempt to go home with the goats of her heart is impossible in the city.
- Grandmama Sesemann is kinder than the housekeeper and sees that something is wrong.

03

### Homesickness, and Prayer

CHAPTERS XI–XIII

*Heidi grows pale and walks in her sleep. She nearly gives up prayer. Counsel about Our Father, and the household's fear of a "ghost," prepare her return.*

- She wails for Snowhopper, the grandmother, and the sun on the mountains.
- The grandmother had taught her to tell every sorrow to God; Heidi must learn to wait as well as to ask.
- Mr. Sesemann and a doctor discover the sleepwalking and order that she be sent back.

> *"Oh, I want to go home. What will poor Snowhopper do without me?"*
>
> **Heidi** · In Frankfurt, when she can no longer bear the city

04

### On Sunday When the Church Bells Ring

CHAPTERS XIII–XIV

*Heidi is restored to the Alp. She throws herself into the grandmother's arms, and the old uncle, hearing the bells, goes down toward the church and a changed life.*

- The child's joy in return is physical: mountains, fir-trees, and the people she loves.
- The grandfather's thaw is one of the book's quiet miracles.
- Village and Alp are not left as enemies.

05

### Clara on the Alp

PART II, CHAPTERS XV–XXIII

*Heidi, well again, makes use of what she has learned. Friends come to the mountain; Clara visits, and unexpected strength comes to her. Partings are not the end of love.*

- A doctor and the Sesemanns see what the Alp has done for Heidi.
- Peter's jealousy does harm and must be faced.
- Clara's improvement is told as a gift of air, friendship, and hope, not as a trick.

Home · Prayer · Compassion · Healing · A Hard Heart Softened

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. The hosted text is Elisabeth P. Stork's 1919 translation (Project Gutenberg #20781), not a later retelling. Names include Snowhopper, Thistlefinch, and the Alm-Uncle.
2. The grandmother's counsel is to go to "Our Father in Heaven" with every sorrow. Keep the wording of this translation.
3. Heidi's cry is "Oh, I want to go home. What will poor Snowhopper do without me?"
4. Part I is "Heidi's Years of Learning and Travel"; Part II is "Heidi Makes Use of Her Experience."
5. The book is openly Christian in the Stork text: prayer, church bells, and trust in God when answers are delayed. Do not flatten it into a mere mountain idyll.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the Elisabeth P. Stork translation (1919), Project Gutenberg #20781, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/heidi/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.