



## The King's Equal

By Katherine Paterson  
ISBN: 9780064433969

### Introduction:

*The King's Equal* is two-time Newbery medalist Katherine Paterson's critically acclaimed fairy tale about an arrogant young prince who must find a woman who is his equal in beauty, intelligence, and wealth. The discussion topics, suggested reading list, and author biography in this reading group guide are intended to spark discussion about the interesting characters and adventures in this enchanting original fairy tale. Once upon a time, a dying king names his son, selfish Prince Raphael, ruler of the kingdom—on one condition: Raphael cannot wear the crown until he marries a woman who equals him in beauty, intelligence, and wealth. Raphael is so arrogant he believes that he never will be able to find a woman who is as smart or good-looking as himself, so he focuses on expanding his wealth and soon his

greed makes him the richest person in the whole kingdom. But one thing he wants most is the thing he hasn't earned—the crown to the kingdom.

Because Raphael is unhappy without the crown, he demands that his councilors search the world over for the princess who is his equal. Eventually, through the shrewd powers of a magical wolf, a poor but clever young maiden named Rosamund is chosen. But the story does not end there. Rosamund is a strong woman who wants her husband to be her equal as much as she is his. So she presents Raphael with a proposition that he cannot refuse if he wishes to win Rosamund as his wife. Consequently, Raphael retreats to the woods and learns about the kind of wealth that will make him truly happy and equal to fair Rosamund.

### Questions For Discussion:

1. Describe the way Raphael leads his subjects. Does he have his kingdom's best interests at heart? How does Rosamund rule differently than Raphael? Which method is more effective?
2. Why does the king demand that the prince marry a woman who is equal to the prince in "beauty, intelligence, and wealth" (page 4)? What is the king trying to accomplish with this request?
3. Consider the importance of the wolf in the story. Why does he appear at first as if he is trying to steal Rosamund's goat, and then turn around and perform great favors for Rosamund? How is this wolf different from wolves in traditional fairy tales?
4. How is *The King's Equal* like and unlike fairy tales you have read before? Consider the similarities and differences between *The King's Equal* and fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*.
5. Why does Rosamund request that Raphael enter the woods for a year and bring back her goats? What is she trying to teach Raphael with this command?
6. What does Raphael learn while he is forced to live in the woods and care for the goats? How does the wolf help him learn what he needs to know in order to survive? How are Raphael's former attitudes humbled by living in the wilderness?
7. Discuss the moral of *The King's Equal*. In your discussion, consider Rosamund's statement to the prince: "Perhaps you are poorer than I, for there is nothing I desire that I do not already possess" (page 38). What does it mean to be truly wealthy?
8. As you read, how did you think the story would end? How are your predictions similar or different from the author's ending?
9. In her National Book Award acceptance speech for *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, Katherine Paterson said, "The wonderful thing about being a writer is that it gives you readers, readers who bring their own stories to the story you have written, people who have the power to take your mythic, unbelievable, ten-foot-high characters and fit them to the shape of their own lives." Even though *The King's Equal* is a fairy tale, can you find similarities between characters in *The King's Equal* and people in your own life? In your own words, explain what Katherine Paterson meant by this quote.
10. Pick volunteers from the group to "act" like Rosamund and put themselves in her shoes. What would Rosamund say about Raphael? What kind of complaints would she have about him? How would she feel about him when he returned from the mountains?