

# Cry for Me

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,206

LEVELED BOOK • S

## Connections

### Writing

Write a backstory for Lalaith. Include the reason she was the only child to sleep peacefully in Valin.

### Social Studies and Art

Create a map of Valin. Include places from the story, such as the queen's palace and Lalaith's farm. Add other places you imagine would be in Valin, such as markets, schools, and parks.



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Reading A-Z

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## Focus Question

What is Lalaith's role in the story?

## Words to Know

conjurers  
defeat  
desperate  
fabric  
plagued

potion  
ridiculous  
scraping  
sorrow

Cry for Me  
Level S Leveled Book  
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## Correlation

### LEVEL S

Fountas & Pinnell	O
Reading Recovery	34
DRA	34





Before the **Conjurers' War**, the kingdom of Valin had been a happy place. After the war, the young Queen Naire was left to rule a land filled with widespread **sorrow**.

She traveled the kingdom to comfort her people, gently wiping away their tears with beautiful handkerchiefs. She was especially gentle with the children. Having lost her own mother, Queen Mahtar, she felt their woe.

Time went on. Children born in peacetime brought joy. Sadness faded into memory. People slowly grew happy again. Valin gradually, quietly rebuilt itself.

Then, on the queen's seventeenth birthday, the doors to the palace opened in the middle of the night. People heard the **scraping** of claws on stone, but they saw nothing.

That was the last night of peaceful sleep for Valin's children. Queen Naire no longer left the palace to see her people.





Ten years later, a young girl named Lalaith was sitting in the darkness of her brother Pegweg's room. She was watching for something, though she didn't know what. Every few moments, Pegweg would snort or mumble something in his sleep, and she had to hold back a giggle.

For ten years, the children of Valin had experienced tearful nightmares every night—all except Lalaith. While other children tossed, turned, and wept in their sleep, Lalaith slumbered quietly. No one, least of all Lalaith, knew why she wasn't **plagued** by the same terrors.

Pegweg had an idea that something was causing the dreams. Others in the kingdom had watched children sleep in the past and learned nothing. Pegweg thought it might be different with Lalaith watching, though, because she didn't have the dreams herself. She had agreed to help, if only because she owed him for milking the cows that morning so she could sleep late.

Lalaith lifted the cover on the lamp to make sure it was still lit. A small ring of yellow light appeared, and she dropped the cover.







Hours later, Lalaith was fighting off sleep when she heard a faint scraping sound. It started across the room, near the open window. Something was moving. She held her breath and waited. The scratching moved closer and closer, and then it stopped. Pegweg's bed creaked.

Lalaith tore the cover off the lamp. Blinding light filled the room. Something black disappeared through the window. In its hurry, the thing dropped a small piece of **fabric**. She grabbed it as she ran across the room.

Outside, it took only a few steps for her to realize she would never find the creature in the darkness.

Then, she heard the scraping again. This time, though, it was all around her. Things moved in the blackness. Suddenly, everything disappeared, and she felt strong claws grabbing her and lifting her up. At their touch, she felt more tired than she ever had before. In moments, she was asleep.



Lalaith awoke on a cold floor. A great hall of polished stone stretched before her, with burning torches set into tall pillars. A woman in a deep blue gown sat on a throne. On her head rested a crown of black metal and dark violet stones. Her face was sunken. Dark circles surrounded her eyes. She looked sad and tired.

"You," the woman hissed. Her voice was dry, like something dragging in dirt. "My creatures have told me of *you*." With the last word, Lalaith heard chittering and scraping from the darkness around her.



“Those creatures are yours?” Lalaith asked.

“Bow before your queen!” the woman snapped.

Lalaith gasped and bowed. This was Queen Naire? What had happened to her?

“Your Highness, I— I—” words failed Lalaith.

“Don’t speak.” The queen’s voice had dropped down to a rasp. “You are different from the other children. You do not weep at night. Perhaps you have royal blood, or you come from the line of Conjurers.” Lalaith tried to explain that she was only a peasant girl who helped her parents on their small farm.





“No matter,” the queen interrupted. “You will never leave this place.” The queen raised her hand. In the darkness around the edges of the hall, things began to move. They crawled and scrambled over each other into the light, toward Lalaith.

Lalaith gasped.

In the darkness, the creatures had been frightening, but now that Lalaith could see them clearly, they looked **ridiculous**. They were thin and covered with dark fur, except for one spot on their round bellies. Their fearsome claws made them waddle like the fat chickens on her parents’ farm. Their large black eyes made her think of her puppy’s face when he knew he’d done something bad.



Lalaith couldn’t help herself. She began to snicker, then giggle, then howl with laughter. She was laughing so hard she was crying. The fabric she found on Pegweg’s bedroom floor was still in her hand. She used it to dry her tears. One of the creatures darted from the crowd and snatched the handkerchief. It scrambled to the queen and offered the cloth to her with a bow.

Queen Naire dropped the fabric into a bowl of dark liquid that started to bubble. With shaking hands, she brought the bowl to her lips and drank. Slowly, she began to stand up. Her face brightened and softened until a beautiful woman stood before Lalaith.

After a few moments, Queen Naire gave her a smile. “I need to tell you a tale,” she said.





The queen told Lalaith how, before their **defeat**, the Conjurers had surrendered control of their creatures but cursed her at the same time. The queen had to drink a **potion** made with children's tears each day, or she would die. To make matters worse, if the queen had any children, the curse would pass down to them.

"For some time after the war, people were still suffering. It was easy to get the children's tears I needed simply by comforting them," the queen explained. As the sadness from the war faded, though, I grew **desperate**. I used my creatures to send the children bad dreams, so I could keep them from suffering in the real world. The potion was made from tears of fear and sadness, though, so it changed me. I am so sorry. I never thought to try tears of joy."

"The curse made me give up hope. I decided to have no children, so as not to pass on the curse. I am the last of the royal line," said the queen sadly.

The queen had tears on her own cheeks now. "Your joyous tears are far more powerful than tears of sadness, however. They have turned this curse into a blessing," the queen said.







From that day forward, Queen Naire had her creatures bring joyful dreams to all the children in her kingdom.

Lalaith and the queen became friends. They often traveled across Valin together. Where once the queen had brought comfort from sorrow, she now brought the joy of laughter. When anyone, especially children, wept with joy, Queen Naire was there to dry their tears.

When she grew old, Queen Naire named Lalaith her heir to the throne. That is how a brave peasant farm girl helped a queen avoid the worst effects of a curse and became a queen herself.

## Glossary

<b>conjurers</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who cast spells and perform other acts of magic (p. 3)
<b>defeat</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the act or feeling of losing or failing (p. 13)
<b>desperate</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having an extreme need or being willing to use extreme measures (p. 13)
<b>fabric</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	cloth, usually made by weaving (p. 7)
<b>plagued</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	deeply distressed or bothered by something, usually repeatedly or for a long time (p. 5)
<b>potion</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a liquid mixture that is supposed to have medicinal, magical, or poisonous effects (p. 13)
<b>ridiculous</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	unreasonable or silly (p. 11)
<b>scrapping</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the act of something rubbing or scratching against something else (p. 4)
<b>sorrow</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	extreme sadness (p. 3)