

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline by Lois Lowry

Book Information

Lois Lowry, The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline
Quiz Number: 18781
Dell, 1983
ISBN 0-440-46625-3; LCCN
150 Pages
Book Level: 4.6
Interest Level: MG

Caroline and her brother believe their mother's new boyfriend has a plan to eliminate them.

Topics: Family Life, Brothers; Family Life, Sisters;
Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship;
Mysteries, Conspiracies; People, Strangers

Main Characters

Caroline Tate the principal character in the story, an eleven-year-old girl with an avid interest in dinosaurs, who along with her friend Stacy, investigates people living in their buildings

Frederick Fiske a new neighbor in Caroline's apartment building who is on leave from Columbia University where he is a history professor

Gregor Keretsky a color-blind, vertebrate paleontologist at the Museum of Natural History who is Caroline's hero, mentor, and friend

Harrison Ledyard a Pulitzer Prize winning author who lives in Stacy's apartment building and although he never appears in the story, he is the subject of Stacy's investigation

J.P. Tate James Priestly Tate, Caroline's thirteen-year-old brother, who has a photographic memory and is an electronics whiz

Joanna Tate Caroline and J.P.'s mother; she is a divorcee who works as a bank teller and begins to date an upstairs neighbor, Frederick Fiske

Mr. and Mrs. Baurichter Stacy's wealthy parents

Stacy Baurichter a rich, eleven-year-old girl who is Caroline's best young friend and whose ambition to be an investigative reporter led to the project of investigating neighbors

Vocabulary

corpus delicti the basic element of a crime; the evidence, as in a body, that proves that a crime has occurred

disparage to belittle or lower the estimation of

incorrigible in this context, not easily influenced, not easily changed

inscrutable incapable of being analyzed; not easily understood; mysterious

malevolently done with the intention of harming or wishing evil on others, spitefully

ostentatiously done to impress others or attract notice

paleontology the science of the forms of life existing in former geologic periods, as represented by their fossils

stealthy done or acting by secret means

Synopsis

Caroline Tate is an eleven-year-old girl who lives on the West Side of New York City in a small apartment she shares with her thirteen-year-old brother, J.P. (James Priestly) and her mother, Joanna. Caroline has an avid interest in vertebrate paleontology that she satisfies by weekly visits to the Natural History museum. Their family life is often disrupted by something going wrong with one of J.P.'s electronic projects.

Caroline's best young friend is Stacy who lives across town in an exclusive apartment building. Stacy's dream is to be an investigative reporter, and she and Caroline are currently working on a project to hone their investigative skills. They are investigating the residents in their respective buildings. While going to the Laundromat, Caroline picks out two letters from the trash can and reads them. They seem to indicate that the new man who moved into the fifth floor apartment was reading about poisons and would be murdering some children in the near future. She phones Stacy to share the news. Stacy, who has been doing her own investigation, first shares that the Pulitzer Prize winning author living in her building is having an affair based on some evidence she collected. When a story regarding the author's marriage is written up in *People* magazine, both girls' efforts turn toward

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline

by
Lois Lowry

solving the mystery of Frederick Fiske, the fifth-floor resident.

When Joanna Tate refers to Frederick as Fred, Caroline fears the children Fred intends to eliminate are she and J.P. After finding another letter addressed to Mr. Fiske, this time mistakenly placed in the Tate mailbox, she goes to her good friend, Gregor Keretsky, a vertebrate paleontologist at the museum. Mr. Keretsky acts as a voice of conscience for Caroline, telling her, among other things, not to open the letter. When she gets home, she asks J.P. for his help. J.P. breaks into Frederick Fiske's apartment when Joanna is out on a date with him. He collects evidence, including a dead mouse, and stores it in a pair of old galoshes in the closet.

Caroline asks if she can invite Stacy and Mr. Keretsky to dinner. Her mother agrees and, on the day of the dinner, informs Caroline and J.P. she has included Fred on the guest list. J.P. devises a plan to stun Frederick Fiske by wiring a chair, confronting him with the evidence in front of witnesses, and then calling the police. All would have gone as planned, except that Frederick was wearing rubber-soled shoes, which made him immune to the electric shock. Caroline spills milk on his feet to get him to take his shoes off, and when he does, J.P. succeeds in blowing a fuse in the apartment house instead of stunning Frederick. In the darkness, both Gregor and Joanna share stories of past aspirations, which prompts Frederick to reveal the project on which he is working; he has rented an apartment on the West Side to write a contemporary novel. His agent had sent him a note to eliminate the kids from the novel he is writing since they weren't working well in the story line. Caroline and J.P. realize their mistake, but don't say anything. The evening, and book, closes with Joanna giving Mr. Keretsky the galoshes in which the evidence is stored to keep his feet dry while walking home. The consequences of this are left hanging, although we are told they were horrible!

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Caroline and J.P. seem as if they had some knowledge of forensics before J.P. broke into Frederick Fiske's apartment. How do we know this?

J.P. already has gathered the tools to break in and also a pair of tweezers, paper clips, and a screwdriver. Caroline remembers he needs gloves so as not to leave fingerprints. J.P. also remembers to bring envelopes to keep the evidence. J.P.'s photographic memory will serve as the pencil and paper for taking notes.

Literary Analysis

How would this book be different if it was written from a first-person point of view?

Mention may be made that if it was written from Stacy, Caroline, or J.P.'s point of view, the perspective on the situations would be from a "younger" viewpoint. Thus, some situations that are now humorous because the reader has a neutral perspective may not be seen as humorous from their point of view. If written from an adult point of view, it may be colored by emotional moments of their past, such as divorce or war and also have a more serious perspective.

Inferential Comprehension

How does Joanna Tate show that she understands that Caroline is a complex person and could never be put into a box?

Joanna Tate lists the many things she loves about Caroline. The fact that she can name the trait and has so many, one hundred, as the book title says, shows she recognizes the many facets of Caroline's personality.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The One Hundredth Thing About Caroline

by
Lois Lowry

Constructing Meaning

Gregor Keretsky has had a very hard life, yet has still managed to be a happy person who embraces life. Do you know anyone who has overcome terrific hardship and is still enjoying life? What do they share in common with Mr. Keretsky?

Answers may include acknowledging the hurt, but not letting it defeat the spirit, trying something new if they can't do what they did before, welcoming new people into their life, and reaching out to help others.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The story takes place in New York City. Large cities offer people access to many opportunities that may not be available in a smaller town. Have the students identify the nearest large city to them. An atlas usually contains close-up maps of major metropolitan areas. Have the students look at the city map and identify different museums, art galleries, universities, historic sites, and performance centers. Let the students plan a day on the town. Have them write about what they would choose to do or see (no shopping, please). What does this say about them?

Understanding Literary Features Stacy and Caroline enjoy detective work and find much of their material in the garbage. They come to wrong conclusions based on scant evidence. This is often the same source of leads in tabloid journalism. Have the students create a tabloid newspaper. They can use the book as a source for headlines and articles or scan a room as J.P. did as he looked for clues and then piece together stories. How close is the tabloid to the reality of the situation?

Comparing and Contrasting J.P. faced the challenge of trying to shock Frederick while being as inconspicuous as possible. He rigged up quite the contraption. Frederick foiled his plan by wearing rubber-soled shoes. Even after removing his shoes, J.P.'s plan failed. However, it took many hours of tinkering around to learn how

things are put together and work. It might be fun for the students to take something apart. Many times a household has some small electronic appliance that is no longer working. With a parent's permission, encourage the student to take an appliance apart to find out how it works. Label the various parts and learn what they do. Read about electronics. See if the student would be able to construct a simple alarm.

Responding to Literature People are affected by the events that occur in their lives. Sometimes the effect is dramatic and physical such as in the case of Mr. Keretsky becoming colorblind after losing his family in the war. At other times the change may be subtler and affect someone internally. Interview people who have lived through or served during a war. How did the experience change them? Report your findings to the class.