

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Spotting the Leopard by Anna Myers

Book Information

Anna Myers, Spotting the Leopard

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146 Pages

Book Level: 4.6

Interest Level: MG

In the late 1930s, H. J. Harper is intent on tracking down a leopard and finding a way to help his older sister study to become a veterinarian.

Topics: Animals, Leopards; Careers, Veterinarian; Family Life, Brothers; Family Life, Sisters; U.S. States/Regions, Oklahoma

Main Characters

Buddy H.J.'s friend

Delbert H.J.'s uncle who has dreams and pursues them

H.J. the main character who tries to set Lucky free

Jessie H.J.'s sister who dreams of going to college to become a veterinarian

Lucky the leopard who escapes from the zoo

Mr. Summers a con man who swindles Delbert out of money

Vocabulary

beholden under obligation; in debt

clientele customers

hotfooting going in great haste; hurrying

lambasted scolded roughly

tuckered tired; weary; exhausted

Synopsis

After saving Ring from a snake bite, Jessie decides to become a veterinarian. This angers Papa because he feels Jessie is dreaming an impossible dream. He feels hurt because he cannot provide the money necessary to send Jessie to college. Jessie and Papa argue about her going to college. H.J. tries to help Jessie live her dream by asking Uncle Delbert to help pay for Jessie's college. When H.J.

sees Lucky in the zoo, he can't help comparing Lucky and Jessie. They are both "up against it" and feel trapped.

H.J. meets Mr. Summers when Mr. Summers sees him admiring his Cadillac. Mr. Summers tries to talk H.J.'s Uncle Delbert into a business deal. Delbert's wife, Maybell, is suspicious of Mr. Summers. Her suspicions are later proved true, but only after Mr. Summers leaves town with Delbert's money.

When H.J. sees a dead deer with cat scratches, he realizes Lucky is living on his homeplace. When he finally meets Lucky, he promises to protect him. He builds a cage in the hopes of trapping Lucky and releasing him into the mountains.

After he traps Lucky, H.J. hears the sound of the hunters coming nearer. He releases Lucky in hopes of giving him his freedom. When Lucky is shot by Buddy's father, H.J. is so upset he cries.

After the shooting, Mr. Andrews comes to visit H.J. and agrees to help Jessie become a veterinarian. Papa agrees to let Jessie pursue her dream.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

In this story, H.J. asks Uncle Delbert about what it's like in eastern Oklahoma. Why did he ask about that part of the state?

He wanted to find a place to release Lucky. He wanted to see the place for himself.

Literary Analysis

Although it is never openly stated, this book's setting is just before World War II. What are some clues to tell you this?

Papa works for the WPA. Roosevelt was president. Papa spoke of Hitler.

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Inferential Comprehension

After H.J. let Lucky out of the cage, Lucky was shot while trying to flee. What might have happened if H.J. had kept Lucky in the cage?

Lucky would have been taken back to the zoo, or Mr. Andrews would have helped Lucky escape to a safe place.

Constructing Meaning

At the end of the book, H.J. saved Uncle Delbert's sign in case he decided to open up another place one day. What have you saved "just in case" you might use it one day?

Sample answers might include the following: a baptismal gown, a baby's hairbrush, an old Halloween outfit.

a brief story about Pearl. How did she feel when she didn't have a toy on Christmas? How did her feelings change when she received a doll? What happened to the doll? Did she keep it and give it to her little girl, or did she pass it on to someone else who had no toy on Christmas?

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors In this book, H.J.'s father works for the WPA. The students might find it interesting to find out more about this work program. After they do some research on the WPA have them discuss what they learned. What other types of jobs might H.J.'s father have done for the WPA? Why might H.J.'s father have gone to work for the WPA? How were WPA workers treated? How were they viewed by the people in the community?

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Plot After Jessie releases Lucky from the cage, the story takes a sad turn. Lucky is shot by Buddy's father. H.J. is upset by this and starts to cry. Some students would find it enjoyable to change the plot. Have them rewrite the ending to their liking. Did Lucky escape? Where would he have gone? Did H.J. ever see him again?

Comparing and Contrasting In this book, the behavior of Lucky, the leopard, is described in some detail. Have the students research the habits of real leopards. How does Lucky's behavior compare to a real leopard? Would it be unusual for a leopard to pace in its cage? Would a real leopard climb into a tree? In this story, H.J. and Ring come upon Lucky while he was up in a tree. The leopard did not attack either H.J. or the dog. Would this be considered odd behavior for a real leopard?

Responding to Literature When Mama realizes a little girl named Pearl does not have one toy on Christmas, she gives Pearl a special doll. The doll is called Mary Beth and once belonged to Patsy, Mama's daughter who died. Have students write