

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Book Information

Natalie Babbitt, Tuck Everlasting

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Book Level: 5.0

Interest Level: MG

Winnie Foster discovers a magic spring that has given the Tuck family eternal life. She is faced with the difficult decision of whether to drink from it and whether to tell all when a stranger wants to know the secret in order to sell the water.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books; Misc./Other; Phoenix Award/Honor; SLJ Best Book

Topics: Adventure, Trials/Tribulations; Common Core State Stds Appendix B Titles, CCSS Grade Band 4-5; Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, 100 Most Read Fiction, ATOS Book Levels 4.0-5.9; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 5: 40 Most Read Books Overall; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 6: 40 Most Read Books Overall; What Kids Are Reading, 2012, Grade 7: 40 Most Read Books Overall

Main Characters

Mae and Angus Tuck a married couple who drank water from a spring that has kept them from aging or dying

Miles and Jesse Tuck the young adult sons of Mae and Angus, who also drank from the spring

the man in the yellow suit a man who wants to make money by selling the magical spring water

Winnie Foster a ten-year-old girl who lives with her parents and grandmother in a well-kept and well-secured home on the edge of a large wood

Vocabulary

brilliant very bright and sparkling; shining

brooch a large decorative pin worn as jewelry

constable a public official who has duties to enforce laws in a town or village

dimensions measurements or appearance of an object that include height, width, and depth; certain properties by which space and time can be measured, located, and distinguished

gallows a frame or frames, usually consisting of two upright posts and a top crossbeam, from which a rope is suspended in order to execute someone by hanging; any frame used to suspend something

lingered waited or stayed for a greater time than usual; was slow to leave; remained or tarried

longed wanted badly; pined; greatly wished; yearned or desired

reluctantly unwillingly; hesitantly; with little or no desire; unenthusiastically; without wanting to or without feeling like it; without eagerness; slowly; uncertainly

rigid stiff and unbending; frozen or unmoving; firm or hard; fixed or unchanging; unwilling or unable to change one's mind or opinions

tension nervousness; a strained excitement; suspense; a feeling of hostility between two or more individuals or groups; a feeling of emotional or mental strain

Synopsis

Ten-year-old Winnie Foster enters her family's wood for the first time in her life and finds a boy drinking water from a spring running through the wood. As the boy, Jesse Tuck, is trying to convince Winnie not to drink the water, his mother and brother arrive. The Tucks decide to take Winnie to their home in order to impress upon her the importance of not drinking the water and not telling anyone else about it.

Unknown to the Tucks, they are overheard and followed to their home by a man in a yellow suit. This man then steals their horse and returns to the Foster home to tell Winnie's parents that he knows

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where she is. The man agrees to tell the Fosters Winnie's whereabouts on the condition that they sell the wood to him. Desperate to have their daughter home safely, the family agrees. The man in the yellow suit then goes to the constable and offers to lead him to Winnie.

Back at the Tuck home, Winnie finds she is being treated well and is even beginning to like the Tuck family. Hoping to persuade Winnie to keep the spring water a secret, Angus Tuck explains why living forever is not as great as it sounds. Winnie is convinced she must never tell the secret. Just before she falls asleep, Jesse asks Winnie to drink the water when she turns seventeen so that he and she may marry and live together forever.

In the morning, the man in the yellow suit arrives and attempts to take Winnie with him. He plans to have Winnie drink some of the water to help him sell the water to others. Upset at the idea, Mae Tuck hits the man across the back of the head with a shotgun just as the constable arrives to witness the blow. The constable takes Mae into custody and returns Winnie to her home.

Since the man in the yellow suit dies from his injury, Mae will likely face the gallows. Frightened at the possibility that the world will find out the Tucks' secret, Winnie volunteers to help Mae escape from jail. In the middle of the night, Winnie goes to the jail with the Tucks. After Miles pries off the cell window and Mae climbs out, Winnie climbs into the jail and takes Mae's place in the bed. The switch is not discovered until morning, and the Tucks are long since gone.

Since Winnie is a minor, she cannot be charged as an accomplice in the escape and is returned to the custody of her parents. There she finds her life has changed, seemingly for the better.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

When Angus went to the cemetery and saw Winnie's plot, the author wrote, "He had wanted it to be there, but now that he saw it, he was overcome with sadness." Why?

He hoped Winnie hadn't chosen to live eternally because of the pain he felt living that way. He was relieved that she had chosen to live in the circle of life, however, he loved her and perhaps a tiny part of him wanted to see her again.

Literary Analysis

How was Angus Tuck shown to be a sympathetic and kind person?

He wanted to keep the water a secret. He was thoroughly delighted when Winnie came to the house. He patiently explained to Winnie why their secret must be kept.

Teachable Skills

Extending Meaning Extending Meaning

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning