

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Christy

by

Catherine Marshall

Book Information

Catherine Marshall, Christy
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Interest Level: UG

Christy leaves home to teach school in the remote Smoky Mountains and finds her faith severely challenged.

Topics: Adventure, Life Changes; Adventure, Trials/Tribulations; Community Life, School; Emotions, Love

Main Characters

Alice Henderson a Quaker mission worker from Ardmore, Pennsylvania, who founded the mission schools

Bird's-Eye Taylor a feuder and blockader

Bob Allen keeper of the mill, he is injured while going to meet Christy at the train station

Christy Rudd Huddleston the principal character, a nineteen-year-old girl who goes to Appalachia to teach at a mission school in the Cove

David Grantland a young minister assigned to preach at the mission

Dr. Neil MacNeill the physician of the Cove

Fairlight Spencer a mountain woman whom Christy befriends

Ida Grantland the spinster sister who has come to the mission to cook for her brother David

Lundy Taylor Bird Eye's large, troublesome, seventeen-year-old son

Mr. Hazen Smith a wealthy Knoxville businessman

Opal McHone Tom's wife, a mountain woman who holds onto old myths

Ruby Mae a talkative red-haired girl who lives at the mission house

Tom McHone a grown son of Uncle Bogg, a proud man who would not accept welfare

Uncle Bogg McHone the county squire, a humorous man and teller of tall tales

Vocabulary

consumption tuberculosis

fealty the fidelity of a feudal vassal to his lord; faithfulness, loyalty

fob a short chain or ribbon attached to a watch and worn hanging from a pocket

funk strong smell or stench

nonplused a state of utter perplexity

puncheon a heavy slab of roughly dressed timber for use as a floorboard

trachoma a chronic eye infection characterized by granulations and scarring of the cornea and conjunctiva, caused by a bacterium

wraithlike with the look of a visible spirit

Synopsis

Christy Huddleston is a nineteen-year-old young woman who has left her home in Asheville, North Carolina, and volunteered to teach at a mission school in the poverty-stricken mountain area of Cutter Gap, Tennessee. She is ill-prepared for the culture into which she enters and is at first repulsed by what she sees. Eager to change things quickly, she writes to businesses and churches to request things on behalf of the mission. When these items prove to be somewhat ridiculous for her surroundings, Christy slowly begins to see beneath the poverty and recognize the beauty of the people around her.

A Quaker woman, Miss Alice Henderson, is instrumental in helping Christy adjust to life in the Cove and in guiding her in her questions of faith. She encourages Christy to befriend the women of the Cove.

Christy is also challenged by her feelings for two men while at Cutter Gap. David, the minister, has been assigned by his seminary to preach in Cutter Gap. He has asked Christy to marry him and confesses that he needs her, even though he is not sure what he wants to do with his life. The other is Doctor Neil MacNeill, a highlander by birth, who with the help of some visiting doctors to the Cove when

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he was younger, was able to go to medical school and return to practice medicine. These two men have very different approaches to solving the problems of feuding and blockading that are occurring among the clans.

Before Christy left for a vacation back home after the first term of school, Miss Alice tells Christy of a painful incident in her youth, which resulted in the birth of a daughter. She informs Christy that her daughter was Doctor MacNeill's wife, who died of typhoid after giving birth prematurely.

When Christy returns to the Cove, she realizes she has missed the people. Ruby Mae, a young girl who has lived at the mission house gets married, and Christy experiences her first highlander wedding with all its rituals and merriment. She dances with the doctor and seems confused about her feelings towards him afterwards. Shortly thereafter, the Cove is hit by a typhoid epidemic. Fairlight is the first to die, and Christy's seeks spiritual answers to life after death. The mission becomes busy with nursing those who have become ill. Christy succumbs to the disease, and while close to death, the Doctor professes his love for her and his belief in God.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

For what reason did Miss Alice share details of Margaret and Neil's relationship with Christy?

On the surface, it could be that she just needed to talk to someone about Margaret's death, since typhoid was again taking the lives of people in Cutter Gap. However, Miss Alice was a very perceptive person and probably recognized Neil's growing interest in Christy and Christy's confusion about her feelings towards both David and Neil. Miss Alice also valued truth and honesty and wanted Christy to know the joys and pain of Neil and Margaret's relationship.

Literary Analysis

This story is told from the first-person point of view. How would it be different if told from the third-person objective point of view?

We would not have the benefit of knowing Christy's inner struggles with faith, love, and life's meaning unless she shared them aloud with another individual. The story would have a more neutral quality about it. The reader might have learned more about others' interactions, however, when Christy was not present.

Inferential Comprehension

How did Miss Alice challenge David in his ministry?

She challenged him both by her example and her willingness to confront him about his faith. She called him to look at his reaction to Bird's-Eye's conversion, his impatience and attitude toward the highlanders, and his life in whatever work he would choose.

Constructing Meaning

Doctor MacNeill states that he likes "fire in a woman." People value different qualities in relationships. What quality would you seek in a person with whom you would choose to have a relationship?

Honesty, a sense of humor, resourcefulness, ambition, wealth, a deep faith, compassion, patience, and an ability to share one's thoughts and feelings may be among the answers.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The hills of the Appalachians reminded the highlanders of their ancestral home in Scotland. Look into the history of Scotland and read some historical accounts of what was occurring there in the mid-1700s. How does this account compare with what Miss Alice told Christy. Trace their journey inland from Wilmington, North Carolina, to the Smoky Mountains of Cutter Gap, Tennessee.

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Understanding Characterization Miss Alice Henderson was a Quaker woman of great faith. Research the Quaker religion. Find out the position they hold on issues such as divorce, war, salvation, etc. What is unique about their faith that makes them different from other Protestant churches? What new insight does this give you into Miss Henderson's character?

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Music speaks to the soul, and young people can especially relate to this concept. They often listen to, play, or sing a song that reflects their mood at a particular moment in time. Have the students choose a project focusing on the music or dance of the Appalachian people. They could research a particular instrument, learn a square dance and teach it to the class, share a song, or play a ballad on an instrument. Class time could be set aside to have a festival and share some corn pone and pot likker.

Comparing and Contrasting Doctor MacNeill contended that the highlanders' blockading enterprise and seeming lack of motivation had much to do with the poverty of the area and a sense that the future held little hope of change. Compare this situation to the inner city ghettos that are riddled with crime, drugs, and poverty. What barriers keep the cycle of poverty going in these areas? How do gangs compare to the clans of the highlanders?