

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Eating Ice Cream with a Werewolf by Phyllis Green

Book Information

Phyllis Green, Eating Ice Cream with a Werewolf
Quiz Number: 313
Dell, 1983
ISBN 0-440-42182-9; LCCN
121 Pages
Book Level: 3.4
Interest Level: MG

When Brad and his babysitter, Phoebe, obtain a magic book, strange things begin to happen around the house.

Topics: Family Life, Sisters; Humor/Funny, Funny; Mysteries, Magic; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - Grades 4-6 (Theme: Friends and Family)

Main Characters

Brad Gowan a twelve-year-old boy who hates to exercise and tends to exaggerate

Fat Nancy Brad's four-year-old sister

Gray Sonderman a teenage neighbor of Brad's who likes Julie, wants to attend West Point and has a father with a mental illness

Hepzibah a marabou stork at the zoo whose flight feathers have been clipped

Julie Bugle a teenage neighbor with whom Brad walks to school

Keith Gowan Brad's athletic father

Lois Gowan Brad's mother, a freelance writer

Phoebe Hadley Brad's eccentric baby-sitter who likes to try out her new hobbies on Brad

Vocabulary

coincidence a number of events that occur at the same time and appear to be planned but are purely accidental

conjure to bring about by practicing magic

debutante a young woman, generally from a wealthy family, who has her first public introduction to society

disowned have had one's existence denied by one's family

exaggerate to represent the truth as being greater than it is

Synopsis

Brad Gowan's parents are going out of town for a week. They hire Phoebe Hadley to baby-sit for Brad and his little sister, Fat Nancy. Brad protests because he says Phoebe does odd things to him when she is trying out new hobbies. Phoebe is the child of wealthy parents who want her to come home and act properly. She prefers trying new experiences to enjoying a wealthy lifestyle.

Brad's parents leave on vacation and Phoebe arrives. Phoebe is wearing a purple robe and carrying *Dr. Curmudgeon's Book of Magic*. After Brad puts Nancy to bed and reads her a book, he and Phoebe try out some spells. After they read the spell for barnyards, a chicken appears in Nancy's room. They throw it through the open bedroom window and say it probably came in that way, but they also wonder if it had anything to do with the spell. To prove to themselves it was just a coincidence, they do a picnic spell, and Brad soon finds the kitchen floor all wet. At first they wonder if it is because picnics are often near streams, but Brad quickly notices that the laundry room has a leaky faucet.

The next day Phoebe takes the kids to her plant shop to check on her plants. Then they go next door to the dance studio, which used to be a bookstore. Phoebe asks the owner for the address of the old bookstore's owner because she has questions about the magic book she bought from him. The next day Phoebe, Brad and Nancy go on a picnic and visit the zoo. At the zoo they see a marabou stork flapping its wings. Phoebe explains that its wing have been clipped to keep it from flying away. Brad thinks this is unfair to the bird. He tries to encourage the bird to fly, but ultimately it can't.

Before leaving the zoo, Brad sees Gray Sonderman. Gray is a teenage neighbor of Brad's who is interested in another neighbor, Julie Bugle. Gray seems quiet and unlike himself. Back at home, Nancy insists that they pretend to call their parents

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on her pink plastic phone. Phoebe and Brad humor her and put her to bed. Phoebe then pretends to call her father and wish him a happy birthday. She doesn't actually call him because she feels so alienated from her parents. Not feeling much like trying magic, they decide to just watch TV.

Walking to school the next day with Julie, Brad learns that Julie and Gray went on a date and that Gray's father has a mental illness. After school, Brad and Phoebe decide to try another spell. To play a joke on Phoebe, Brad asks her to do a spell to conjure up two quarts of ice cream that he thinks are already in the freezer. Phoebe obliges, but when Brad goes to the kitchen, he finds there is no ice cream. The next evening Phoebe and Brad try more spells. When Phoebe begins to cast a spell for a boyfriend, Brad's parents call from Bermuda. After everyone talks to them, Phoebe resumes her spell, but Brad notices that she is doing a different spell. Upon closer examination they discover she has cast a spell for a werewolf.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings and a delivery man with two quarts of ice cream appears. Is this a boyfriend for Phoebe or a werewolf? Phoebe invites him in, and they all eat ice cream. When Phoebe puts Brad to bed, she tries to convince him that the magic isn't real and that there are explanations for everything that has happened.

Brad falls asleep thinking about the stork who couldn't fly. The next day he makes wings for the bird. Phoebe convinces him not to take them to the zoo to try to put them on the bird. They go out for pizza with Brad's new friend, Martin, and then come home and play with the wings themselves. The next morning Brad learns from Julie that her mother had a pet turkey. Brad realizes it was the animal that had jumped on Nancy's bed.

The next day, after finishing his social studies project with a classmate, Brad sees Gray's father cying on the curb. He runs to tell Gray and his mother. Gray thanks him, and Brad goes home. Brad's parents come home the next day. Brad tells them what they did with Phoebe, and his parents tell

him how much fun they had on vacation. He asks them not to hire Phoebe as baby-sitter again though he secretly wonders what adventure they will have with her the next time.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Did Phoebe believe in the spells she cast?

Phoebe appears to believe in them at times and chooses to do spells that won't create total chaos in the house if they come true. She also seeks the address of the man who sold her the book so that she can ask him some questions about it. She seems to want to know if he thinks the book is a real magic book. However, if she truly believes in the magic, she might not do some of the spells. She realizes that all the things that happen after she casts the spells are explainable. She plans to use the book again to entertain other children while she baby-sits.

Literary Analysis

Why did Brad talk to his little sister even though he knew she was nearly asleep and wasn't listening to him?

Brad's family moved around a lot and as a result Brad does not have friends to whom he feels particularly close. He still needs someone to share his thoughts with and to feel close to. Since Nancy is always around no matter where the family moves, he feels close to her.

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Inferential Comprehension

Phoebe is upset with her plant, Bill, because of what he has done to her other plants, Imogene and Ida. What effect does Bill have on Imogene and Ida? Why?

Bill is a large bushy plant that blocks the sunlight from the other plants. This causes the other plants to stretch in search of sunlight and thus become gangly and thin.

Constructing Meaning

Is it fair for the zookeepers to clip the wings on the stork?

Some people would think it is not fair because it restricts the animal from doing what it naturally wants to do. By not being able to fly, the stork might suffer anxiety, and this could be perceived as not fair to the bird. Others might point out that the bird is not in its natural setting, and if it were to fly away, it might die from lack of food or be hurt in an accident. By clipping the bird's wings, the zookeepers can protect it and take good care of it.

interest. Allow each student to choose and share one interest and the jobs that match that interest.

Responding to Literature One job that is of particular interest to Brad is inventing. Have the students reread the chapter where he makes wings for Hepzibah. Ask students to think of a problem in the world and sketch out an invention that could solve that problem. If there is time, have the students make and present their inventions.

Recognizing Setting The author of this story seems to be very familiar with the real city of Madison, Wisconsin. The descriptions of the places that the characters visit in Madison are accurate. Give your students a street map of Madison and ask them to find the approximate locations of some of the places from the story, such as State Street, the Capitol Building, and the Vilas Zoo.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Feelings Both Brad and Phoebe feel their parents expect them to be like them. Neither Brad nor Phoebe want to be the way their parents envision them to be. Discuss why parents sometimes have expectations that their children either don't like or cannot fulfill. Have the students write a journal entry about their parents' expectations of them. Encourage them to consider whether they like their parents' expectations and whether they feel they meet them.

Understanding Characterization Brad mentions that he likes storks, inventing things and flying. He mentions that these interests will enable him to choose from a number of different careers when he is an adult. Have the students think about their own interests and what different jobs they could have as adults. Ask the students to list their interests on paper and next to each interest, list five different jobs they could do with that