

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Locked in Time

by
Lois Duncan

Book Information

Lois Duncan, Locked in Time
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210 Pages
Book Level: 6.5
Interest Level: MG

Nore arrives at her stepmother's Louisiana plantation to find her new family odd and an aura of evil and mystery about the place.

Topics: Family Life, Fathers; Family Life, Stepfamilies; Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other

Main Characters

Celina the maid at Shadow Grove for a brief time
Charlie Lacouture Celina's grandfather who worked at Shadow Grove and knows a bit of its history
Chuck Robbins Nore's father, a writer recently married to Lisette Berge
Dave Parlange Phil's nephew who also is working at Shadow Grove and befriends Nore
Gabe Berge Lisette's seventeen-year-old son
Josie Berge Lisette's thirteen-year-old daughter
Lisette Berge Chuck's new wife
Louis Berge Lisette's son who died in a horseback riding accident
Nore Robbins the seventeen-year-old narrator of the book
Phil Parlange a roofer working at Shadow Grove

Vocabulary

bayou a creek, secondary watercourse, or minor river
cosmopolitan composed of elements gathered from all or various parts of the world
guttural sounded in the throat; harsh or rasping
initiation the rites, ceremonies or ordeals with which one is made a member of a sect, society, etc.

irrevocable unalterable
jalousies blinds or shutters having horizontal slats sloping like louver boards, to admit air and light and exclude sun and rain
louvered with panels slatted for ventilation
luminous shining
pique a fit of resentment
sporadically occurring occasionally

Synopsis

As the book opens, Nore Robbins is being picked up at the airport by her father, Chuck Robbins. Nore's mother was killed in an accident less than a year earlier, and Chuck has already remarried Lisette Berge. She has two children, seventeen-year-old Gabe and thirteen-year-old Josie.

From the time Nore arrives at Shadow Grove, Lisette's house in Louisiana, she senses something strange about the Berges. The children keep referring to events that happened long ago, and there are frequent references to time and its passage.

While the house's roof is being repaired, Nore meets one of the roofers, Dave Parlange. Later the children sneak out of the house to go to the new teen dance club in the nearest town. Nore learns that Gabe keeps a bottle of herbal potion to drug their parents' anisette so they will sleep when Gabe and Josie want to go out at night. At the club, Nore meets and dances with Dave, and he asks her for a date. She invites him to come to the house anytime. On the way home, Gabe almost kills them with his wild driving. After that, he avoids Nore.

Later in the summer, Gabe takes her out on the river. He asks her to run away with him, and when she refuses, he suddenly starts the boat and rams it into a log, and she falls overboard. Although she cannot swim and almost drowns, she makes her way back to the house. Her father doesn't believe her story about Gabe.

She manages to get into town alone to talk to a man who had worked at Shadow Grove in the past. He

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tells the story of succeeding generations of women who return to Shadow Grove with two teenaged children and a new husband, who eventually dies. Nore believes it is the same woman and that her father is in great danger.

That night, Josie comes to her room, tells her that she has drugged the adults, offers her money, and tells her to leave. She refuses. Instead, she sneaks into the adults' room and gets the keys to the locked storage cabin. In it, she finds proof that the Berges really have stopped aging. She sleeps late, awakens to find that her father is about to leave for New York, tells him she has the proof for her accusations, goes to her room, and finds the documents are gone. Her father leaves. She is expecting Dave Parlange that evening at 6:00, and she hides in the grounds until then. As she is heading for the gate to meet him, she decides to stop in the storage cabin to get some other documents. Lisette forces Nore and Dave into the cabin, locks it, sets it on fire, and leaves with Gabe. She has given the keys to Josie, who lets Nore and Dave out before they die. On the way into town, Gabe crashes the car and he and Lisette die instantly.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Nore describes a photograph she finds in Gabe's drawer, and how this causes the whole world to seem to fall out from under her. Why did this photograph have this effect?

Lisette, Gabe and Josie are in the photograph, along with the man in the very old oil painting that hangs in the parlor. Also, the photograph itself is very old and printed upon a sheet of very thin metal. Clearly, Lisette, Gabe and Josie are much older than they look.

Literary Analysis

What literary devices does the author use to create tension but to assure the reader that Nore will be okay in the end?

The author uses foreshadowing to create tension: Nore's mother warns her in dreams; Nore states before going to the disco that that night was "the beginning of the end," and, of course, "It had been planned that I was to die on the following day." At the same time, she is telling the story so she must be alive, and if the reader remembers, this book is all a flashback.

Inferential Comprehension

Josie eventually became Nore's friend and even tried to save her. Why might she have done this?

It began when Nore turned down a date with Dave Parlange so as not to hurt Josie. Later she sympathized with Josie through a tirade of weeping. Josie must have realized that Nore really liked her and wanted to be her friend.

Constructing Meaning

Would you want to live forever? Given what you've learned about it from this book, why or why not?

One hopes to elicit an understanding that the student's friends and family would grow old and die, while the student stayed young. If people noticed this, they would be curious and resentful. Then there are all the practical considerations described in the book, such as the impossibility of keeping a job, maintaining a driver's license, etc.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors During the summer in Louisiana, Nore learns a little bit about Cajuns and Creoles. Ask the students to do some research on Cajuns and Creoles. Are the descriptions in the book accurate? Was there really a conflict between them?

Understanding the Author's Craft The story is told from Nore's point of view. Ask the students to retell it from any of the other characters' point of

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view. This will change the story completely. In the story, many things make Nore uneasy: dreams of her mother, strange conversations, etc. She ignores the warnings. Have the students go through the book and pinpoint the warnings. Have them discuss what might have been different if Nore had paid attention to these warnings. Ask the students how they would have reacted. It's easy to say, "I would have figured it out sooner," but in reality would they have?

Comparing and Contrasting In the book, the Berges do not age. This creates money problems for them. Other mythical creatures, notably vampires, live forever. Have the students read some books on vampires or other creatures that live forever, and see how they cope. Are they rich or poor? Do they hold jobs? How do they earn money?

Making Predictions In the book, Nore refuses to go away with Gabe. Have the students rewrite the story and explore what would have happened had Nore left with Gabe. At the end of the story, Gabe leaves Josie behind because she has the keys to unlock the burning cabin and free Nore and Dave. Have the students rewrite the end of the story with Nore and Dave able to escape another way. Would Gabe have taken Josie with him?