

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Search for Delicious

by
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Book Information

Natalie Babbitt, The Search for Delicious

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Book Level: 5.4

Interest Level: MG

The Prime Minister is compiling a dictionary and when no one at court can agree on the meaning of delicious, the King sends his twelve-year-old messenger to poll the country.

Topics: Common Core State Stds Appendix B
Titles, CCSS Grade Band 2-3;
Fantasy/Imagination, Fantasy

Main Characters

Ardis a mermaid who promises to help Gaylen if he returns the whistle that was taken from her

Canto a minstrel who gives Gaylen a stone key on a chain

DeCree the Prime Minister

Gaylen the twelve-year-old messenger of the King; the foster son of the Prime Minister, who had named him Vaungaylen

Hemlock the Queen's evil brother, who wants to control the kingdom

Medley the daughter of the Mayor of the first town; Gaylen's future wife

Pitshaft the leader of the dwarfs

the King the king of the kingdom

the Queen the King's wife; sister to Hemlock

the woldweller a wise, nine-hundred-year-old, humanlike creature who lives alone in a tree in the forest and answers questions

Vocabulary

basin a usually round, open container for liquids, including a sink or washtub

bellowed yelled or roared; cried out in an enraged or angry way; let out a loud noise

dismay a feeling of despair or hopelessness; a loss of confidence or courage; a feeling or sense that all is lost; an awareness of coming danger; a drop in one's spirits

fiercely in a violent, savage, or vicious manner

lute a stringed instrument that has a pear-shaped body and is played like a guitar

poll a survey that registers people's opinions or attitudes on a subject; a formal gathering of information or opinions

precise accurate or exact; certain or particular; showing extreme care for and attention to details; very careful; concerned about exactness; clear; definite

proclamation an announcement or declaration, often made in public; a notice

tunic a long, loose shirt, as worn by ancient Greeks and Romans

wearily tiredly; in an exhausted or fatigued manner

Synopsis

Vaungaylen, who is called Gaylen, is the twelve-year-old foster son of the Prime Minister, DeCree. The Prime Minister is compiling a dictionary, and no one in the court can agree on which food best represents Delicious.

Gaylen is sent out to poll the citizens of the kingdom. He soon discovers that the kingdom is on the brink of civil war, not only because of the disagreement about the meaning of Delicious, but also because Hemlock, the Queen's brother, has ridden ahead of Gaylen, stirring up trouble. Hemlock has an evil plan to seize control of the kingdom.

During his journey, Gaylen encounters fantastical beings who had been living in the kingdom before humans arrived and interfered. He meets an old woldweller and some helpful dwarfs. He also runs into a friendly minstrel, who gives him a good-luck charm, an old stone key on a chain. From the various people and other beings he meets, Gaylen learns about a mermaid named Ardis. Eventually, Gaylen realizes that the key the minstrel gave him is actually a whistle that belongs to Ardis. He decides

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to find her and return it.

When Gaylen reaches the lake where Ardis lives, he discovers that Hemlock has dammed it to prevent water from reaching the kingdom. Gaylen talks to Ardis and agrees to give her the whistle if she promises to unblock the dam. Ardis makes the promise, takes the whistle, and disappears under the water. Soon after, the dam gives way and water pours down the mountainside. Everyone is happy and agrees, "Delicious is a drink of cool water when you're very, very thirsty."

Open-Ended Questions

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

Constructing Meaning

The dwarf Pitshaft said that people were foolish and wasted their time. What happened in the story that showed his statement is, at least in part, true?

The people in the castle argued about which food should represent Delicious. The King decided to send Gaylen out to poll his kingdom, causing even more arguments about what Delicious meant. It took three days to poll just the first town. Hemlock wasted time putting a walnut into one of Gaylen's apples and riding ahead of Gaylen to stir up trouble. By the time Gaylen reached the third town, civil war had broken out over something very silly. Hemlock wasted time having a dam built. Even after narrowly avoiding a full-blown civil war, the people in the castle started arguing over another word.

Constructing Meaning

The story has many idioms, or phrases that mean more than their words put together. What is one idiom from the story, and what does it mean?

Answers will vary but may include the following: The Prime Minister said Gaylen was "the apple of my eye." This means he loved Gaylen more than anything else. The King said, "Too many cooks spoil the soup, you know." He meant that when too many people try to do something or take charge, the result is usually a mess.

Teachable Skills

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning

Differentiating Fact and Opinion Differentiating Fact and Opinion

Understanding the Author's Craft Understanding Author's Craft

Making Inferences Making Inferences