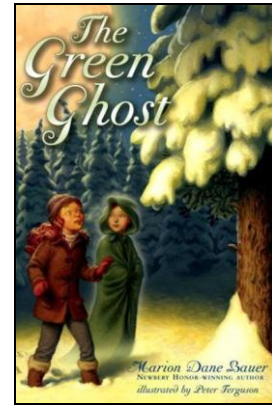


Classroom Guide

The Green Ghost

written by Marion Dane Bauer and illustrated by Peter Ferguson
published by Random House Books for Young Readers
(a Stepping Stone Book), 2008

A note to the teacher: This is a wonderful book for a transitional reader and this guide includes activities for that age group as well as for older readers.



About the book

It's winter. It's cold. It's snowing. Kaye and her family are on their way to Gran's house for a traditional Christmas Eve. But a terrible blizzard forces them to seek shelter in a cozy farmhouse with a nice older lady named Elsa. Kaye soon discovers a secret in the snowy forest outside the window and follows the ghost of Elsa's long dead sister, Lillian, to a tree with a very special story to tell.

The Green Ghost is a companion book to *The Red Ghost* and *The Blue Ghost*, titles in Random House Books for Young Reader's Stepping Stone series. Accessible to beginning readers, *The Green Ghost* has a storyline that is also engaging to older children with basic reading skills. This is the perfect story for young mystery lovers.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

- ◆ **Lillian (Lilly)**, the girl in the 1938 part of the story, and the ghost in the present
- ◆ **Elsa**, Lillian's little sister (1938) and the older woman (in the present) who helps Kaye and her family
- ◆ **Kaye**, the modern-day girl who meets the ghost of Lillian and reintroduces Elsa to their tree
- ◆ **Mom and Dad**, Kaye's parents
- ◆ **Winter**. The story revolves around the challenges caused by winter weather and storms. Readers must understand the power of winter in order to sympathize with the other "human" characters in the story.

About the Author

Marion Dane Bauer's writing for children covers a wide range of genres including fiction and nonfiction, picture books, chapter books, young adult novels, and writing guides. Her titles include the Newbery Honor book *On My Honor* as well as *Rain of Fire*, winner of the Jane Adams Peace Association Award. Bauer is on the faculty of the Vermont College Master of Fine Arts in Writing for Children and Young Adults program and in 1996 was awarded the Kerlan Award for the body of her work. www.mariondanebauer.com

About the Illustrator

Peter Ferguson is a multi-talented artist whose whimsical works appear in books such as the Sisters Grimm series, the Lucy Rose series, and *The Anybodies* and its sequels. Many examples of his work appear on his website www.uberpete.jitterjames.com

Working with The Green Ghost

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOU READ THE BOOK

- ◆ What is a mystery? Have you read other mystery stories? Have you told scary stories or been to a party or sleepover where someone else told scary stories?
- ◆ Have you ever been cold? Have you ever seen snow? Have you ever been caught in a blizzard or a snowstorm? How did you feel?
- ◆ Have you ever wanted something so much that you would do almost anything to get it?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AFTER YOU READ THE BOOK

- ◆ A mystery writer plants clues. What is a clue? Did you pick up on the clues?
- ◆ When did you know that the old lady was the young Elsa in the 1938 part of the story?
- ◆ What do you think about Lillian going into the forest to get the perfect Christmas tree?
- ◆ Kate is upset that her Christmas might not be the same as it is every year. What are your holiday traditions? Do they change a little each year?
- ◆ Why do you believe Kate invited Elsa to share Christmas with her family?

The Power of Words

Painting the imagination

Words can be a paintbrush for the imagination. Here are some examples of wonderful word images Marion Dane Bauer has written for *The Green Ghost*:

- ◆ "Lillian's mother tipped a *crusty* loaf out of the pan. Her *cheeks were flushed* from the heat of the oven." (pg. 26)
- ◆ "In the headlights the snow kept coming at them. *It sped toward them like millions of white bullets.*" (pg. 16)
- ◆ "The wind kept *moaning*" (pg. 16)
- ◆ "...when he [dad] stepped out, *the storm swallowed him.*" (pg. 19)
- ◆ "Her *hair stood in white corkscrews* all over her head." (pg. 34)
- ◆ "Her *face bloomed* into friendly wrinkles." (pg. 36)
- ◆ "*Moon shadowed* forest" (pg. 59)

- ◆ “The toast filled the kitchen with a *rich, nutty smell*.” (pg. 36)
- ◆ “The teakettle *hummed* softly.” (pg. 39)

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

1. Have the students close their eyes. Tell them to imagine the picture as you read each sentence. Read slowly.
2. Pick a sentence and have the students draw a picture from what they hear. Compare the pictures. Talk about how we all see different images in our minds.

An angel or a light in the window? Making it a mystery ...

The author plants clues throughout the story to help us get closer to figuring out the mystery. There are several clues—you may find more.

1. The light—or the face, whatever it was—called to her. Not with a voice. The only “voice” she heard was the wind’s. (page 22)
2. She just floated out of the room. Well, no. She didn’t float. Not really. She must have walked. (page 54)
3. You breathing folks! What other kind of folks were there? (page 54)
4. The footprints she followed ... there was only one set. (page 67)

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

If you wanted someone to figure out how to find a buried treasure, you would give them clues. Break the classroom into two groups. Each group should find a treasure in the classroom and figure out where to hide it. Then each group should create six clues that will help the other group find the treasure. You don’t want them to find it right away, so maybe some of the clues will be harder than others, saving the easiest-to-solve clue until last. After all, everyone wants to solve a mystery!

Mysteries are fun for students of this age and there are many ways you can play with them in the classroom. Go to www.kidsloveamystery.com for ideas and lesson plans.

Noticing how a book is designed

Telling a story in parts. Some of this book takes place today and some of this book takes place in the past, in 1938. How can you tell the difference? When the author and the editor decided to help readers be clear about this, not confused, what did they do?

Why do you think the author told part of the story in the past and part of the story today by switching back and forth? Why didn’t she just tell us the story in the past and then tell us today’s story?

It's beginning to look a lot like winter ...

Even if you live in a place where snow is unusual, a writer like Marion Dane Bauer helps you understand what winter is like with descriptions that appeal to our five senses.

- ◆ The white wall divided at the last instant to let them through. (page 8) (what you see)
- ◆ It [the snow] sped toward them like millions of white bullets. (page 16) (what you see)
- ◆ When he stepped out, the storm swallowed him. (page 19) (what you see)
- ◆ For an instant, the driving snow blinded her. (page 21) (what you don't see)
- ◆ The wind howled. (page 24) (what you hear)
- ◆ The wind unwound the scarf from her neck and flung it away. (page 24) (what you feel)
- ◆ The snow squeaked beneath their boots. (page 29) (what you hear)
- ◆ that it didn't have that good evergreen smell. (page 40) (what you smell)

Why is it important that this book takes place in winter? Can you write a winter story using your five senses?

If you've never experienced winter or snow or a blizzard, this would be a hard story to write ... you'd be guessing and it might be hard to convince the people who read your story that you know about winter. Instead, write about one of the seasons that might create danger for someone who lives near you, someone you might showcase in a story. Try to use as many adjectives as possible to describe your weather when it is very hot, rainy, windy, muddy, stormy, rainy, or sunny for a long period of time. Perhaps it will help to brainstorm "weather words" on the bulletin board.

Connecting students to the older generation

Elsa and Kaye formed a bond when Kaye took Elsa to the tree. "It's for you... She said to tell you she's here..." (p79) Their bond became stronger when Kaye invited Elsa to spend Christmas with her family (p84). Connecting with the older generation is important for young people. It gives them an opportunity to learn about history, creates special friendships that are different than those with parents or friends their own age, and brings joy to those who might be lonely.

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Part One: The Interview

Have your students interview an older person, someone the age of a grandparent. If possible, record the interviews on tape recorders or video cameras. Have students write down questions ahead of time.

Sample questions:

- ◆ What did you do for fun when you were my age?
- ◆ What kinds of clothes did you wear?
- ◆ If you celebrated Christmas, what kind of a Christmas tree did you have? When did you decorate it? What kind of decorations did you use?
- ◆ If you celebrate another winter holiday, can you tell me how you celebrated it?
- ◆ What kinds of toys did you play with?
- ◆ Who were your friends and what were they like?
- ◆ Did you have any brothers or sisters? Did you get along with them? Did you do things together? If so, what kinds of things?
- ◆ Did you have chores to do?
- ◆ Where did you live?
- ◆ What was your school like?
- ◆ Did you ever do anything you weren't supposed to do?
- ◆ Do you remember keeping secrets?

Part Two: Writing the Story - Someone from the past travels to YOUR time

Using the information from the interview, have the students write a story. Tell them to imagine that a child from the past is a ghost, and comes to visit them. They have a secret and can share it only with them. What is the secret? How do they share it? Why is it important? Share these stories with the class.

Teacher References

HOW MYSTERIES FIT INTO BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

- ◆ Knowledge: Students arrange characters and events in the mystery.
- ◆ Comprehension: Students classify events, describe characters, and explain precisely what has occurred.
- ◆ Application: Students apply existing knowledge to the mystery by illustrating, dramatizing, and writing their interpretations.
- ◆ Analysis: Students analyze, categorize, and differentiate characters and events.
- ◆ Synthesis: Students collect and organize facts to form hypotheses.
- ◆ Evaluation: Students appraise, argue, assess, and evaluate their opinions in the process of solving the mystery.

Examples of mysteries specifically for children

This site, posted by Dakota Meadows eighth grade classes, features two-minute mysteries written by the students every year since 1996.

<http://www.isd77.k12.mn.us/schools/dakota/mystery/contents.html>

On MysteryNet.com, you'll find children's mysteries, some written for children and others written by children. They periodically run a writing contest for children.

<http://kids.mysterynet.com/>

Here are online mysteries to solve with Rex, the Dino Detective, at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

<http://www.childrensmuseum.org/geomysteries/mysteries.html>

For a good guide to other children's mystery books (by age), with reviews written by students, look here:

<http://www.firstclues.com/>

Companion Books and Web Resources for the Classroom

SELECTED BOOKS BY MARION DANE BAUER

A Bear Named Trouble, Marion Dane Bauer, Yearling, 2006

The Blue Ghost, Marion Dane Bauer, Random House Books for Young Readers (A Stepping Stone Book for Young Readers), 2006

The Red Ghost, Marion Dane Bauer, Random House Books for Young Readers (A Stepping Stone Book for Young Readers), 2008

The Painted House, Marion Dane Bauer, Random House Books for Young Readers (A Stepping Stone Book for Young Readers), 2007

BOOKS FOR TRANSITIONAL READERS

Ivy and Bean, Annie Barrows, illustrated by Sophie Blackall, Chronicle Books, 2006

Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang, Mordecai Richler, illustrated by Fritz Wegner, Tundra Books, 2003

My Father's Dragon, Ruth Stiles Gannett, illustrated by Ruth Chrisman Gannett, Yearling, 2005

Sideways Stories from Wayside School, Louis Sachar, illustrated by Julie Brincklow, HarperTeen, 2004

The Judy Moody Totally Awesome Collection: Books 1-6, Megan McDonald, illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds, Candlewick, 2007

WRITING AND INTERVIEWING RESOURCES

An Interview with Harry the Tarantula, Leigh Ann Tyson, illustrated by Henrik Drescher, National Geographic Children's Books , 2003

A Writer's Story: From Life To Fiction, Marion Dane Bauer, Clarion Books, 1995

What's Your Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction, Marion Dane Bauer, Clarion Books, 1992

Writing with Authors Kids Love Writing: Exercises by Authors of Children, K. Johnson, Prufrock Press, 1998

Writing Your Life: Autobiographical Writing Activities for Young People, Cottonwood Press, 1998

You Can Write a Story! A Story-Writing Recipe for Kids, Lisa Bullard, illustrated by Deborah Haley Melom, Two-Can Publishing, 2007

CHILDREN'S NOVELS ABOUT FAMILIES, GOOD FRIENDS AND SIBLINGS (READ-ALOUDS)

Abuela, Arthur Dorrow, Puffin, 1997

Betsy-Tacy series, Maud Hart Lovelace, illustrated by Lois Lenski, HarperCollins, 1993

Boxcar Children series, Gertrude Chandler Warner, Albert Whitman & Company, 1990

Enchanted Wood, Enid Blyton, Egmont Books Ltd, 2002

Gentle's Holler, Kerry Madden, Viking Books, 2005

Great Gilly Hopkins, Katherine Patterson, HarperCollins, 1987

Klipfish Code, Mary Casanova, Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2007

Little House on the Prairie series, Laura Ingalls Wilder, illustrated by Garth Williams, Harper Trophy and Scholastic, 1981

Little Klein, Anne Ylvisaker, Candlewick, 2007

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge, Mem Fox, Illustrated by Julie Vivas, Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1989

OTHER BOOKS ABOUT CHRISTMAS TREES

A Wish to Be a Christmas Tree, Colleen Monroe, Sleeping Bear Press, 2000

Christmas Tree Farm, Ann Purmell, illustrated by Jill Weber, Holiday House, 2006

The Finest Christmas Tree, Ann Hassett, illustrated by John Hassett, Houghton Mifflin/Walter Lorraine Books, 2005

Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree, Robert Barry, Doubleday Books for Young Readers, 2000