

Ghost Road, The



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Recommended Grades: 4-7

Subjects/Courses: Career Education,
Social Studies, English Language Arts

ERAC Review

DESCRIPTION

Twelve-year-old Ruth finds herself in an old Newfoundland town this summer, visiting an old aunt instead of traveling with her father. Here, she and her cousin Ruby discover deep, dark family secrets, stories of curses affecting their family for generations, and experience ghosts and spirits, all leading them on a journey of discovery of their own family heritage and the mysterious secrets that they must unearth. Suitable for intermediate students, the highly-engaging “The Ghost Road” is an appropriate whole-class read-aloud or literature circle selection. This story of adventure and mystery in pursuit of the truth about the past lends itself to an exploration of students’ own family heritage and lineage.

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum? Extensively

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Comments:

CURRICULUM FIT

This novel supports the Grades 4–7 English Language Arts curriculum with the Big Idea that "exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world." Readers will be able to relate to the Curricular Competency of "constructing meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world." This novel also supports the Grade 5 Social Studies curriculum with the Big Idea of how "immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity." This book supports the study of how Canadian immigration has changed over time and of the increased population in the province and territories.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gender Roles, Identity & Sexual Orientation:	The discussion of gender roles is consistently mentioned throughout the novel. The story is set in 1978. The following perspectives are taken from the female characters: In Newfoundland, girls have a tougher time and therefore they learn to cook, clean, and look after the children; the boys don't do chores so the girls have the brunt of all the work; there is "no women's liberation" in Newfoundland and this is only found on the mainland. The setting in which readers find the elderly female characters is consistently in the kitchen—baking, as well as running errands in town and/or cleaning a room within the house.
Belief System:	There are simple references to the Bible, the crucifix, the devil, and God. The plot involves a ghost story that includes angry spirits and possession.
Violence:	One of the twins has clairvoyant abilities and has continuous visions and dreams of a shipwreck with people about to drown, a man and two women being burned in a fire, and of domestic violence. One of the young female characters gets possessed and threatens the other girl with death.
Safety:	The two young female characters go in search of a secret cove without telling any adults where they are going. They decide to spend the night in a root cellar while caught in a storm and are suddenly trapped when an avalanche occurs when being threatened by an angry spirit. A loose rock caused by the avalanche injures one of the girls, leaving an open wound on her head and knocking her unconscious.
Language:	The main character says she is "grinning like a jackass".

Social Considerations Comments:

Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning? Extensively

The primary social considerations to address to students would be about the safety of the young twins and the violence that occurs in the visions. This novel is a ghost story and will hook young readers, but it is important to be aware of students who are more sensitive to content that is of the supernatural and that contains violence.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content:

Should this product be identified as Canadian?	Yes
Is the resource engaging?	Extensively

GENERAL CONTENT

Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?	Extensively
Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?	Extensively
Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?	Extensively

Audience:

Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively
Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?	Extensively
Can the content be differentiated?	Moderately
Is the level of detail appropriate?	Extensively
Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively
Are the visuals appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively

Comments:

This resource is engaging and allows readers to think creatively and critically. It allows readers to make connections to the self, to text, and to the world. The protagonists are twelve years of age, therefore the content and language within the text are suitable for the intended age group. The book details many adventures and mysteries that the twins seek out to discover together and this engages young readers to want to continue reading the book. The family's heritage is discussed at length, which will allow readers to think about their own heritage and how their families came to immigrate to Canada.

TECHNICAL DESIGN

Does the resource make effective use of the medium?	Extensively
Is the location of illustrations appropriate?	Extensively
Is the resource easy to use?	Extensively
Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?	Extensively
Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?	Extensively

Comments:

This novel is sixty-seven chapters and is 349 pages long. The illustrations within the book are black and white and are placed in the appropriate locations. There are diagrams of family trees, illustrations of the flora and fauna that can be found in Newfoundland, and there is a map of the rooms in the house. The family trees are difficult to decipher given the complicated family lineage, but the remainder of the illustrations are easy to understand. Although this book is long, the size of the text is large, making it easy to see. The chapters are short, which makes the reading seem less daunting. The language within the text is easy to understand with the limited use of advanced vocabulary.

PRINT NOVEL

Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?	Extensively
Does the text broaden students' experiences and understanding?	Extensively
To what degree is this text stylistically rich?	Extensively

Plot description:

PRINT NOVEL

Instead of travelling the world with her father this summer like she usually would, twelve-year-old Ruth has been shipped off to an old aunt's place in Newfoundland, a place she has never been to and with people she has never met. It's 1978 and they still don't have electricity everywhere. When her cousin Ruby arrives, the girls discover there is more to their family than either of them ever knew, including life-altering secrets, ghosts, a witch, and a century-old curse that has mysteriously caused the deaths of girls in their family for generations. It is up to Ruby and Ruth to get to the bottom of the mystery and break the curse or die trying.

Related Comments:

The storytelling is highly engaging since it is so rich in characterization. Young readers will be able to connect with the main characters in terms of their personality traits and personal experiences. The experiences of loss, death, blended families, and learning about your own family heritage can be quite interesting to many readers. The book's plot is based on adventure and mystery, which would hook young readers who are seeking adventures of their own.

Descriptors:

Genre:

Adventure
Fantasy
Mystery / Suspense

Literary Highlights:

Rich Characterization
Well-developed themes
Effective figurative language
Point of view

Type:

Novel

Visual Highlights:

Effective use of visual elements
Clear sequence of images

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

Comments:

This novel would suit an intermediate classroom in a variety of ways. This book can be read as a whole-class read-aloud for an intermediate class. For upper intermediate students, this book can also be used as a literature circle option. The literature circle can be based on Reading Power strategies, especially in the areas of connection, question, and visualizing. Some ideas of extended activities after reading this novel could be having the students create their own family trees to map out their family lineage and starting a family heritage project. Students can also conduct a research project based on the Maritime provinces to learn more about the people and the environment.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

At intended grade level(s)

Comments:

Starred by Kirkus Reviews and is one of the Canadian Children's Book Centre's Best Books for Kids & Teens (Spring 2019).