

DOGTAG SUMMER

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH PARTRIDGE

BLOOMSBURY USA CHILDREN'S, 2011

Synopsis

It is the summer of 1980, and twelve-year-old Tracy—or Tuyet—is planning to hang out with her best friend Stargazer in their northern California seaside town. Stargazer is looking forward to summer, with big plans to build and launch a Viking funeral ship. Tracy, however, is somewhat unsettled. She has always felt different, back in Vietnam with her birth family and in the U.S. with her adoptive family. The Vietnam War has ripped her life apart, leaving her unmoored, and has affected all the people whom she loves. Her memories of Vietnam feel like dreams, but she remembers that the villagers called her *con-lai*, or "half-breed," because her father was an American G.I. and her mother was Vietnamese. Her adoptive father served in the war, but her adoptive parents are strangely secretive about her past in Vietnam.

When Tracy and Stargazer discover a soldier's dogtag hidden among her father's locked possessions, it drives a wedge in her friendship with Stargazer and shatters the surface calm of her relationship with her adoptive father. Tracy becomes increasingly haunted by dreams of her past and troubled by her place in the present. Where does she belong and who loves her? Elizabeth Partridge follows Tracy's journey of self-discovery as she reevaluates her complicated and painful past, illuminating for modern readers the complexities of being a young adult in any time and the difficulties for Americans even today of reconciling our aspirations and our actions in the Vietnam War.

Hooks

- How do you feel about summer vacation? What are things to look forward to and what are things that make you anxious?
- Have you ever had a best friend who was the opposite sex? What was special about that friendship?
- Does being adopted change a child's life in significant ways? Why or why not?
- Does your family's heritage affect who you are? Does it matter when your family came to the United States?

- Does everyone see all of your “pieces” or are there parts of your personality that you find difficult to share with others? How does middle school, unlike elementary school, affect your understanding of who you are and your ability to be your true self?
- Who were the winners and losers in the Vietnam War? How does the Vietnam War affect us today?

About the Author

Elizabeth Partridge grew up in a family full of artists who captured extraordinary people and American life through photographs. Her grandmother was the pioneer photographer Imogen Cunningham (who showed the beauty of everyday life), her godmother was Dorothea Lange (who wanted her photographs of down and out Americans in the 1930’s to stir others to action), and her father was Rondal Partridge (an apprentice to Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams who focused on pollution and the quirky way we live). Given her artistic family, her childhood was different from that of other children. She remembers fondly the family camping trips where her parents impulsively rounded up the family and headed out for some extended period of time in nature. She says of her childhood, “School was fairly optional, so were shoes and shirts.” Although money was often tight, her parents encouraged her to pursue her dreams

Partridge was the first woman to graduate with a degree in Women’s Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. She then journeyed to Oxford, England to study acupuncture and was an acupuncturist for more than twenty years before closing her medical practice to write full-time.

Partridge writes fiction and nonfiction, for the youngest readers all the way up to adult readers. In her nonfiction work, she showcases intense, creative, or courageous people who have made a difference. Her eye for selecting photographs for these nonfiction works as well as her comprehensive and incisive writing style is widely praised. In her fiction work, she often explores themes of self-identity, family, and national origin.

Partridge has written over a dozen books to widespread acclaim, including *Marching to Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don’t You Grow Weary*, as well as biographies of Dorothea Lange, Woody Guthrie, and John Lennon. Her books have received many honors, including National Book Award Finalist, Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, Los Angeles Times Book Prize, Michael L. Printz Honor, SCBWI Golden Kite Award, SLJ’s Battle of the Books, and the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award.

Today, Elizabeth Partridge is on the core faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults.

Related Links

Elizabeth Partridge's official website, www.elizabethpartridge.com

Pinterest Board for *Dogtag Summer*:

<https://www.pinterest.com/allysonifeeney/dogtag-summer/>

Teacher's Guide Created by Pam B. Cole, Professor of English Education and Literacy, Kennesaw State University:

<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5244976ce4b0e1d5e9f1ac71/t/524b0bb6e4b01b933a702144/1380649910197/DogTag+Teacher%27s+Guide.pdf>

Connections

Other Books by Elizabeth Partridge

Nonfiction for Young Adults

John Lennon: All I Want Is the Truth. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2005 (Printz Honor book).

Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2009 (2010 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Young Adult Literature, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for nonfiction, *School Library Journal's* Battle of the Books, and the Jane Addams Award).

This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie Viking Books for Young Readers, 2002 (National Book Award finalist and winner of the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for nonfiction).

Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange. Puffin Books, 1998.

Children's Books

Annie and Bo and the Big Surprise. Puffin, 2002.

Big Cat Pepper. Bloomsbury Books, 2009.

Clara and the Hoodoo Man. Dutton Books, 1996.

Kogi's Mysterious Journey. Dutton Juvenile, 2003.

Moon Glowing. Dutton Juvenile, 2000. *Oranges on Golden Mountain*. Dutton Juvenile, 2001.

Pig's Eggs. Golden Books, 2002.

Whistling. Greenwillow, 2003.

Adult Books

Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning. Chronicle Books, 2013.

Dorothea Lange—A Visual Life. Smithsonian Books, 1994.

Quizzical Eye: The Photography of Rondal Partridge. CHS Press, 2002.

Anthologies

Open Your Eyes: Extraordinary Experiences in Faraway Places. Viking, 2003.

Words that Changed America: John F. Kennedy, The Inaugural Address. Viking, 2010.

Vietnam War

Bunting, Eve. *The Wall.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers, 1992 (picture book).

Burg, Ann E. *All the Broken Pieces.* Scholastic, 2009.

Caputo, Philip. *10,000 Days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War.* Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2011 (nonfiction).

Collins, Suzanne. *Year of the Jungle.* Scholastic, 2013 (picture book).

Coulombis, Audrey. *Summer's End.* Speak, 2005.

Dowell, Frances O'Roark. *Shooting the Moon.* Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008.

Hobbs, Valerie. *Sonny's War.* Farrar Straus Giroux, 2002.

House, Silas. *Eli the Good.* Candlewick Press, 2009.

Huynh, Quang Nhuong. *The Land I Lost: Adventures of a Boy in Vietnam.* HarperCollins, 1900.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam.* Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *A Million Shades of Gray.* Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010.

Kerley, Barbara. *Greetings From Planet Earth.* Scholastic, 2007.

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again.* HarperCollins, 2011.

Paterson, Katherine. *Park's Quest.* Lodestar Books, 1998.

Testa, Maria. *Almost Forever.* Candlewick Press, 2007.

White, Ellen Emerson. *The Journal of Patrick Seamus Flaherty, United States Marine Corps.* Scholastic, 2002.

White, Ellen Emerson. *Where Have all the Flowers Gone? The Diary of Molly MacKenzie Flaherty.* Scholastic, 2002.

Other Selected War Stories

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *The Impossible Knife of Memory.* Viking Books for Young Readers, 2014.

Beal, Ishmael. *A Long War Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier.* Sarah Crichton Books, 2008.

Morpugo, Michael. *War: Stories of Conflict.* Pan Children, 2005.

Tsuchiya, Yukio. *Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals, People, and War.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers, 1997 (picture book).

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Dogtags

After showing students pictures of military dogtags and explaining why they are used, have students cut out replicas of a dogtag from heavy construction paper. Then, ask them to write three lines on the dogtag describing themselves. Explain how to write a haiku poem if students would like to experiment with that form of poetry on the dogtag.

Families

As a class, compare and contrast Tracy and Stargazer's families. Then have students think about their own family and compare it to Tracy's and Stargazer's families. What elements are similar and which are different? What do they like most about their own family? Make sure to share details of Elizabeth Partridge's family from the "About the Author" section above to enrich your classroom conversation.

The Prevalence and Symbolism of Water

Water is important to the story, appearing at numerous key moments. Have students share places in the story where water is important. Discuss what water might mean as a symbol in each of these situations. Further, ask students for their thoughts on water in California today; how has the story and the drought in California affected their thinking?

IN THE CLASSROOM

Childhood Photos

Photographs give clues to the past and the people captured in them. For example, Tracy has a photograph of herself as a young child at the orphanage. Ask students to bring in photos from when they were young children. Tell them not to put their names on the back. Make copies of the photos and pass them around, asking other students to look at the picture and write down the details they observe. Have students guess, based on their observations, who is shown in each of the pictures. If there is time, ask students to select one photo and imagine a life for the child pictured. Have them create one paragraph based on the photograph from the first person perspective. Finally, reveal the identity of each of the photographs and invite students to share their paragraphs with the class.

Lists to Bring Order and Understanding

Stargazer starts making lists when he thinks something bad is going to happen. Think about your life; is there anything that could go wrong? Create one or more lists to organize your life or explain what is going on. Alternatively, write a list poem about yourself. What did you learn about yourself as a result of writing the poem?

Summer Vacation

Unlike most students, Tracy feels somewhat empty and sad when she thinks about summer vacation. Have a classroom discussion about the best and worst aspects of summer vacation. Ask your students to imagine their ideal summer vacation and to explain what makes it ideal. Conclude by having students create their own comic strip detailing their ideal summer vacation.

Orphans and Adoption

There are many orphans in children and young adult books, but not many in real life. Brainstorm a list of books that have an orphan as a central character. Then, discuss in which of these books the orphan was adopted. Finally, conduct a class conversation on why authors create characters that are orphans. How does the character of an orphan and/or adoption change the possibilities of the story?

For an activity, ask students to read a book with an orphan as a main character and write a short essay on how the orphan changed or grew over the course of the novel. Alternatively, ask students to write a short story where the central character is an orphan. After they finish the story, ask them to reflect upon the setting they selected and the characteristics they ascribed to their main character.

The Power of Photographs

Have students pull photos of the different groups in the Vietnam War: for example, protesters in the U.S., members of the U.S. government, the Vietnamese people, and the U.S. military in Vietnam. Enlarge photos for classroom viewing and ask students to analyze the elements of the photographs. In addition, ask students to select historical pictures of what they think Tracy and Stargazer might look like.

Vietnam War

Prior to your discussion of the book, have students share what they know about the Vietnam War. Then, have them share their thoughts after reading the book. Did the book change their thinking? Encourage students to share ideas of additional research they might conduct in order to better understand the Vietnam War. If you have time, divide students into research teams to learn about the topics that intrigued them. Finally, using the research they learned, conduct a classroom debate on the Vietnam War, assuming it is early in the 1960's (the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War escalated in the 1960's). Have your class debate the pros and cons of the U.S. increasing its involvement in the war.

Boats

Tracy and Stargazer build a Viking funeral ship. Have students look up what such a ship looked like as well as find images of other funeral ships from earlier times. Have a class discussion on the cultural significance of funeral ships. Conclude by bringing in materials for students to create their own small boats, either in the style of a funeral ship or any

other historical style they have researched. Ask them to launch their boat outside of class--on a nearby creek or river or gutter. Finally, ask them to share their launching experiences--how hard was it to find some water in California today?

Additional Chapters

Have students imagine what happened to Tracy's mother and grandmother after Tracy left. Ask students to write a chapter from the perspective of Tracy's mother or grandmother following Tracy's departure.

DOLL BONES

BY HOLLY BLACK

MARGARET K. McELDERRY BOOKS, 2013

Synopsis

Zach, Poppy, and Alice have been friends since they were young, and as middle school students, they still love playing with their action figures and dolls, imagining a magical world of adventure and heroism. But disaster strikes when Zach's father throws out all his toys, declaring he's too old for them. Zach is furious and physically stricken, feeling like pieces of his psyche have been discarded and destroyed. He decides that his anger will overwhelm him unless he stops playing the game and starts avoiding Alice and Poppy.

Shortly thereafter, the girls pay Zach a visit in the middle of the night and tell him about a quest they must all take together. It is Poppy whose nightmare has launched them on the quest; she swears that she is being haunted by a ghost of a young girl whose bones have been ground up and used to create the porcelain for the spooky china doll that belongs to Poppy's family. Poppy says that they must find the graveyard with the girl's empty grave and bury the doll. Otherwise, the ghost of the girl will continue to haunt them and make their lives miserable.

Poppy, Alice, and Zach feel compelled to set off that night, wondering if they believe in ghosts, are trying to save their friendship, or are just ready to be in charge of their own destinies.

Hooks

- Have you or someone you've known ever had a big adventure? If not, have you had any adventures with your parents? Did the experience change you?
- Has anyone ever trusted you to keep a big secret? Did you finally share the secret or did someone find out about the secret? What makes secrets dangerous?
- Do you believe in ghosts or have you ever experienced something you couldn't explain?

- Have your parents ever told you to give up a hobby or interest because you were too old?
- Can you ever be too old for something you love?
- Have you or someone you've known ever been so angry that they did something very unreasonable? What are ways one can control anger?
- Have you or anyone you know ever wanted to run away from home? Why?
- When did you first notice boys and girls having crushes on each other? How did you find out about the crush? If someone liked you, would you want to know about it and how would you like to find out about it?

About the Author

Holly Black was born in New Jersey and spent her early years in a decaying Victorian mansion. She grew up loving reading and writing, and her mother fed her imagination with ghost stories and books about faeries. She received her BA in English and went on to seek a Masters degree in Library Science. In addition to writing *Doll Bones*, for which she received a Newbery Honor award in 2014, Ms. Black co-wrote *The Spiderwick Chronicles* series with her friend Tony DiTerlizzi. Ms. Black has also written fantasy novels for teens and young adults. Her latest books are *The Darkest Part of the Forest* (a young adult fantasy novel) and *The Iron Trial* (the first book in the series, a middle grade fantasy series).

Related Links

Holly Black's official website, <http://blackholly.com>

Connections

Ghost Stories

Avi. *The Seer of Shadows*. HarperCollins, 2008.
 Bauer, Marion Dane. *The Blue Ghost*. Random House, 2005.
 Bunce, Elizabeth C. *A Curse Dark as Gold*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008.
 Compestine, Ying Chang. *A Banquet for Hungry Ghosts*. Henry Holt and Co., 2009.
 Cooper, Susan. *Ghost Hawk*. Margaret K. McElderry, 2013.
 Creech, Sharon. *Pleasing the Ghost*. HarperCollins, 1996.
 Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. Various publishers.
 Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins, 2008.
 Griffin, Peni R. *The Ghost Sitter*. Scholastic, 2001.
 Hahn, Mary Downing. *The Doll in the Garden: A Ghost Story*. Clarion Books, 1989.

Hahn, Mary Downing. *All the Lovely Bad Ones: A Ghost Story*. Clarion Books, 2008.
Ibbotson, Eva. *Dial-a-Ghost*. Dutton Children's Books, 1997.
Irving, Washington. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Various publishers.
Jensen, Dorothea. *The Riddle of Penncroft Farm*. Harcourt, 1989.
Klise, Kate. *Dying to Meet You*. Harcourt, 2009 (First book of the series).
Mould, Chris. *The Icy Hand*. Roaring Brook Press, 2008 (Second book of the series)
Nixon, Joan Lowery. *The Haunting*. Delacorte Press, 1998.
Oliver, Lauren. *Liesl & Po*. HarperCollins, 2011.
Peck, Richard. *The Ghost Belonged to Me: A Novel*. Viking Press, 1975 (First book of the series)
Pratchett, Terry. *I Shall Wear Midnight*. HarperCollins, 2010 (Final book of the series)
San Souci, Robert D. *Thirteen Stories to Chill and Thrill*. Cricket Books, 2003.
Schwartz, Alvin. *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. Lippincott, 1981.
Tolan, Stephanie, S. *Who's There?* Morrow Junior Books, 1994.
Turnage, Sheila. *The Ghosts of Tupelo Landing*. Kathy Dawson Books, 2014.
Vande Velde, Vivian. *Ghost of a Hanged Man*. Marshall Cavendish, 1998.

Friendship Between Boys and Girls

Bantle, Lee, F. *Diving for the Moon*. Macmillan Books for Young Readers, 1995.
Fitzmaurice, Kathryn. *The Year the Swallows Came Early*. HarperCollins, 2008.
Giff, Patricia Reilly. *All the Way Home*. Delacorte Press, 2001.
Hannigan, Katherine. *True (...Sort Of)*. Greenwillow Books, 2011.
Haworth, Danette. *Violet Raines Almost Got Struck by Lightning*. Walker & Co., 2008.
Henkes, Kevin. *Bird Lake Moon*. Greenwillow Books, 2008.
House, Silas and Vaswani, Neela. *Same Sun Here*. Candlewick Press, 2011.
Konigsburg, E.L. *The View From Saturday*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1996.
Lloyd, Natalie. *A Snicker of Magic*. Scholastic, 2014.
Lord, Cynthia. *Half a Chance*. Scholastic, 2014.
Lord, Cynthia. *Touch Blue*. Scholastic, 2012.
Mass, Wendy. *11 Birthdays*. Scholastic, 2009.
Mass, Wendy. *The Candymakers*. Little, Brown and Co., 2010.
Mass, Wendy. *Every Soul a Star*. Little, Brown and Co., 2008
Messner, Kate. *The Brilliant Fall of Gianna Z*. Walker, 2009.
Oppel, Kenneth. *The Boundless*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2014.
Paterson, Katherine. *The Bridge to Terabithia*. Crowell, 1977.
Schmidt, Gary, D. *Okay for Now*. Clarion Books, 2011.
Spinelli, Jerry. *Eggs*. Little, Brown and Co., 2007.
St. Antoine, Sara. *Three Bird Summer*. Candlewick Press, 2014.
Urban, Lynda. *A Crooked Kind of Perfect*. Harcourt, 2007.

Quests

- Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. Macmillan, 1977.
- Alexander, Lloyd. *The Book of Three*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964 (Book one of a five book series).
- Appelt, Kathi. *The Underneath*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008.
- Barron, T.A. *The Lost Years of Merlin*. Philomel Books, 1997 (Book one of a five book series).
- Collins, Suzanne. *Gregor the Overlander*. Scholastic, 2003 (Book one of a five book series).
- Cooper, Susan. *The Dark is Rising*. Atheneum, 1977 (Book one of a five book series).
- Farmer, Nancy. *The Sea of Trolls*. Atheneum, 2004 (Book one in a three book series).
- Funke, Cornelia. *Dragon Rider*. Scholastic, 2004.
- Gordon, Roderick and Williams, Brian. *Tunnels*. Chicken House/Scholastic, 2008 (Book one in a six book series).
- Hunter, Erin. *Warriors and Seekers* series. HarperCollins Children's Books, various publication dates.
- Kibuishi, Kazu. *Amulet: The Stonekeeper*. Graphix, 2008 (Book one of a six book series).
- Mull, Brandon. *Spirit Animals: Wild Born*. Scholastic, 2013 (Book one of a series currently being written by various authors).
- Jacques, Brian. *Redwall*. Philomel Books, 1986 (Book one of twenty-two books).
- Lin, Grace. *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers, 2009 (Book one of two books).
- Nesbet, Anne. *The Cabinet of Earths*. HarperCollins, 2012.
- Oliver, Lauren. *The Spindlers*. HarperCollins, 2013.
- Riordan, Rick. *The Lightning Thief*. Miramax Books/Hyperion Books for Children, 2005 (Book one of a five book series).
- Riordan, Rick. *The Lost Hero*. Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010 (Book one of a five book series).
- Rutkoski, Marie. *The Cabinet of Wonders*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008 (Book one in a three book series).
- Smith, Jeff. *Bone: Out From Boneville*. Scholastic, 1996. (Book one of a ten book series).
- Stephens, John. *The Emerald Atlas*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011 (Book one of a three book series).
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Houghton Mifflin Co, 1965 (Book one of a three book series).
- Vanderpool, Clare. *Navigating Early*. Delacorte Press, 2013.
- Weston, Robert Paul. *Zorgamazo*. Razorbill, 2008.

Other Books by Holly Black

- The Coldest Girl in Coldtown* (Young Adult)
- The Darkest Part of the Forest* (Young Adult)
- The Iron Trial*: Book 1 of the Magisterium series.
- Monstrous Affections* (Anthology with other writers).
- My True Love Gave to Me* (Holiday anthology with other writers).

The Spiderwick Chronicles series with Tony DiTerlizzi.
Tithe: A Modern Faerie Tale (Young Adult)
Welcome to Bordertown (Anthology with other writers)
The White Cat: The Curse Workers 1 (Young Adult).

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Keeping Secrets

Secrets play a big part in *Doll Bones*. Poppy hates it when Zach and Alice keep secrets, and Zach's failure to tell his friends why he can't play the game sets up the entire story. Do you think some secrets should be kept? Which ones and from whom? Have students share their experiences with secrets, if they are comfortable doing so, and reflect as a class on the benefits or disadvantages of keeping secrets from the important people in your life. Students can follow up with a reflective piece of writing.

Growing Up

Adolescence and middle school is a time of physical and emotional growth. New friends as well as enemies are made. Some students start to date. Bodies change and emotions can be difficult to control. Both Zach and Polly look at growing up glumly at several points during the story. For example, Zach's tremendous physical growth has made boys and girls treat him differently. Zach is also disillusioned at times, wondering "whether growing up was learning that most stories turned out to be lies." He even contemplates running away from home. Poppy says "growing up... seems like dying" and worries that Zach and Alice are changing while she is not. Have a class discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of growing up and being in middle school.

Group Storytelling

When Zach, Poppy, and Alice play with their dolls, each member creates an element of the story and the others must adapt to the changing storyline. Work in a small group or as a class to tell a collaborative story. It will be up to each person to think quickly and add on to what the previous student shared. Decide on rules beforehand (for example, no extreme violence, genre, supportive behavior by others, participation by everyone at least once, a "go to" person like Poppy who excels at interjecting interesting storyline elements).

Play Pretend

Zach says "You can't play pretend forever." Is this true? What are the jobs in the adult world that allow you to "play pretend"? Why or why not would you be interested in these jobs and what are the skills needed for these jobs?

IN THE CLASSROOM

Quests and Personal Growth

Holly Black makes several references to two of the most famous quest series ever written, *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Chronicles of Prydain* by Lloyd Alexander. Poppy, Zach, and Alice are storytellers who create quests for the characters they play, and each firmly desires a real life quest. Zach says, "Quests are supposed to change us." In what ways do the three characters change in the course of the story? Next, have students look at the "Connections" section of this Resource Guide and select two quest stories to read and compare. In particular, ask them to focus on similar and dissimilar elements of the story and how the fictional characters changed following their quest. Alternatively or additionally, students could write their own quest story.

Create a fictional character and write an adventure

Zach, Alice, and Poppy are all great storytellers and each identifies in some way with the character they play in their game. Zach loves being the William the Blade--fighting pirates, lifting curses, and helping others. Alice has recently started to play Lady Jaye, an impulsive thief who is always getting in trouble and adventure, while Poppy creates evil mermaids who lure ships and men to their death. Ask students to create their own fictional character; one that blends some of their own desires and thoughts with the ideas and thoughts they wish they were bold enough to act upon. After brainstorming the physical and emotional traits of their fictional characters, have students write a short adventure story featuring their character. Students who love art should also draw their character or create a map of the kingdom where their story takes place.

Ghosts and Scary Stories

The ghost of Eleanor Kerchner plays a big part in *Doll Bones*, and several events happen in the story that Poppy, Zach, and Alice cannot logically explain (the trashing of their campsite, the repeated reference to an additional dining and traveling companion by others they meet, unexplained and unusual sensations). Ask students to participate in a day of spooky oral storytelling where each student must tell a story involving unexplained or creepy happenings to the class. Students may seek inspiration from a movie, TV show, book, or their own brain. Screen stories ahead of time for duplicates and appropriateness.

Superstitions

Step on a crack and break your mother's back. Hold breath when pass a cemetery or the spirits of the newly dead will enter your body through your mouth and possess you. Just like the characters in *Doll Bones*, everyone has superstitions. Have students share their superstitions and why they believe they are powerful and must be followed. Then, working in pairs, ask them to use print and electronic resources to further research superstitions. Have them compile what they think are the ten strangest superstitions they find and share their findings.

Bedroom Description

Like the characters in the book, our bedrooms share insights into our interests and hobbies. Zach's room has piles of dirty laundry and a bookshelf "stuffed with books on pirates, adventure novels, and textbooks." His desk has magazines, a computer, LEGO pieces, and ship models. Poppy's room has piles of things that used to belong to her older sister (used makeup, notebooks, old Barbies). She also has bookshelves overflowing with fantasy paperbacks and overdue library books on Greek myths, mermaids, and local hauntings. What items are in your room? What, if anything, embarrasses you about your room? What would you want your friends to notice? What do your parents pester you about with regard to your room? Have students write a detailed description of their room.

Daydreams, Dreams, and Nightmares

Zach's father hates that he is a daydreamer, and Alice wonders if Poppy makes up some of her creepy dreams. Have students write a short, creative story on an imagined or actual daydream, dream, or nightmare they've had. If there is time, have students to share their stories orally with the class.

Favorite Dolls and Toys

The toys and dolls that Zach, Alice, and Poppy play with are treasured items from elementary school as well as the props that allow their imaginations to take flight. Ask students to bring in a favorite doll or toy from elementary school. Have a group sharing session of what made the toys special. Ask them when they decided they were too old to play with the toys they loved in elementary school. How was the decision made—they felt too old or they thought others would judge them? Finally, ask students to write a creative story based on one of the toys brought in, either their own or one brought by a classmate.

The Great Queen

The Great Queen is the creepy and mysterious doll that prompts Poppy's, Zach's, and Alice's quest. She has been a mysterious and powerful character in their stories for years and was purchased by Poppy's mother at a tag sale. Have students look at the illustrations of the Great Queen in the book and then find quotes from the book describing the Great Queen. Next, have them look at pictures of vintage china dolls and famous queens through history. Finally, ask students to draw how they imagine the Great Queen.

Scariest Doll/Toy/Stuffed Animal Contest

Invite students to bring in their scariest doll, toy, and/or stuffed animal from home. Ask students to create a creepy story for the doll/toy/or stuffed animal. Invite students to read their stories aloud to the class. Take photos of students with their dolls/toys/or stuffed animals. Tell them to look as scary as possible for the photo!

Parental Control

Middle school students expect more freedom because they are becoming more competent, but often parents continue to try to control their behavior. Have students find passages from the book showing how Poppy and Zach's parents and Alice's grandmother treat them. Do they give them independence or do they try to control their behavior? How much freedom should be granted to middle school students and should they earn it? In what ways do you show you are ready for more control over your life?

Mermaids

Poppy has a collection of mermaid dolls she uses for the game; with Poppy's imagination, the mermaids have lethal intentions, desiring to lure a ship's crew onto the rocks and then eating the pirates. What mermaid stories do you know? Compare mermaid tales from around the world. Are mermaids generally dangerous or helpful to humans?

GHOST HAWK

BY SUSAN COOPER

MARGARET K. McELDERRY BOOKS, 2013

Synopsis

Ghost Hawk follows the lives of two boys, Little Hawk and John Wakeley, and their journey to manhood in seventeenth century New England. At eleven, Little Hawk is sent into the woods during winter with a tomahawk, his bow and arrows, a steel knife (received by his father in an exchange with the white settlers), and his wits. If Little Hawk can survive for three months after being left alone and blindfolded, he will be a man.

Little Hawk's adventures are thrilling and frightening, but Little Hawk survives, besting a wolf and the bitter cold of winter. He looks forward to his homecoming and his reunion with his family; however, during his absence, the village has been destroyed by disease. Never did Little Hawk imagine that the dangers he faced during his three-moon ordeal would be less frightening than the changes wrought on his family and his village by the white settlers. He must face a shockingly different future.

John Wakeley is ten when his father dies, and he is apprenticed shortly afterward to a cooper. During his seven-year apprenticeship, he comes to realize that he views Native Americans differently than his fellow Englishmen. Encounters with Little Hawk and Roger Williams shape his perception of Native Americans and prevent him from viewing them with suspicion, prejudice, or disdain for his entire life.

Ghost Hawk is told from the cultural perspectives of these two richly drawn characters. Part adventure story and part spiritual journey, this is a story of kinship between two men from different cultures who seek to do what they believe to be right in difficult and uncertain times.

Hooks

- When does a boy become a man in today's society? How does age matter to growing up, and what other factors are important?
- Have you heard of anyone today who has survived alone in the wilderness? What were the details of the experience?

- Should land be owned or shared? What should happen when two people or two cultures want the same land?
- Can one culture be superior to another? If no, why do you think many people believed that for so long?
- What do you suppose happens when you die? Do you believe you can communicate with the people left behind or observe them in their daily activities?

About the Author

Growing up during WWII in England, **Susan Cooper** listened to her mother read stories by candlelight that wavered as bombs fell overhead. In an age before TV and with evening restrictions, she spent hours reading fairy tales and Dickens. Her childhood set the stage for the struggle that exists in many of her fantasy novels—the struggle between light and dark, good and evil. She and her brother both fell in love with words and stories and were the first writers in their family.

At the urging of her high school headmistress, Susan Cooper applied to Oxford University where she was finally accepted after her second application. She was at Oxford while J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis were professors, and the focus of her literature classes was British writing before the 1830's. Upon graduation she pursued a career in journalism, working as a reporter and features writer for the *London Sunday Times*. Susan Cooper then moved to the U.S., settling in Massachusetts. Eventually she wrote for the theater and also spent time as a screenwriter. For many years of her writing career, the late—and legendary—Margaret K. McElderry was her editor.

Susan Cooper has written for adults and children, and her Dark is Rising Series is one of the most respected and beloved fantasies of all time, winning a Newbery Medal, a Newbery Honor, and two Carnegie Honors. In 2012, Susan Cooper was the recipient of the Margaret E. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement from the ALA. Today, she lives in Massachusetts on an almost island in a salt marsh that is accessible to the mainland only when the tide is out.

Related Links

Susan Cooper's official website, www.thelostland.com

Conversation between Susan Cooper and Jim Dale about the audio version of the book, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV0B2lbrl6A>

Connections

Native American Life

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George, Jean Craighead. *Julie of the Wolves*. Harper and Row, 1972.

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Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*. Bradbury Press, 1987.

Other Young Adult Books by Susan Cooper

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The Boggart and the Monster. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1997.

The Dark is Rising. Atheneum, 1973. (First of five book series).

Green Boy. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2002.

Dawn of Fear. HMH Books for Young Readers, 1970.

King of Shadows. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1999.

Seaward. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1983.

Victory. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2006.

Activities

IN THE LIBRARY

Becoming a Man

Ghost Hawk deals with the journey to manhood of Little Hawk and John Wakeley. Have students compare the two journeys—which was more difficult and why?

Novel Subsections

The novel is divided into four parts: Freezing Moon, Planting Moon, Burning Moon, and Ripening Moon. Have students find a quote from each section that best explains the title of each section.

Land Ownership

Have students look up the lyrics to Woodie Guthrie's famous song, "This Land is Your Land," penned in 1944. Why does Susan Cooper open the book with one verse of this song? What parts of the U.S. are still "owned" by everyone? Contrast the way Native Americans view the land and nature to the way the British settlers view the land. Cite evidence from the novel to support the viewpoints.

Native American Football Mascot

Have students share thoughts as to whether the Washington Redskins should be allowed to continue using their name or whether it is too offensive for Native Americans.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Deadly Diseases

Study the diseases brought by white settlers to which Native Americans had no immunity. Look up symptoms for each of the diseases. Based on the student research, have students discuss which disease might have devastated Little Hawk's village.

Gender Differences

Have students compare the roles of men and women in the Pokanoket tribe. Then have them compare these gender roles to those of the Pilgrim colony, as shown in the book. Have them write an opinion essay as to where they would have wanted to live during the time of the novel.

Historical Figures

Ghost Hawk takes place in the region where the Pokanoket tribe lived—the area that became the Massachusetts Bay Colony—and mentions several historical figures. Have your students learn more about one of the famous individuals who lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, including John Williams, Squanto, Miles Standish, Governor William Bradford, or Edward Winslow. Then have them write an acrostic poem that reveals each man's contribution to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Different Cultural Perspectives

Much of the tension and misunderstandings in *Ghost Hawk* arise from the lack of trust between two cultures. Leaping Turtle distrusts all white settlers, and Thomas Medlycott states that even though the Native Americans have never attacked the settlers, "no savage c[an] be trusted." Have students rewrite a portion of the story from the opposite perspective from which it is told.

King Philip's War

Eventually the tensions between the white settlers and the Native Americans erupted into the bloody conflict known as King Philip's War. Have students learn more about this conflict, the casualties suffered on both sides, and how the war changed the relations between the involved parties.

Courtroom Drama

A Boston court banished Roger Williams and ordered him to return to England. Instead, he escaped to Rhode Island territory. Have students research Roger Williams' trial and then stage a drama of the court proceedings.

Puritan Religion

Have students research the Puritan religion and determine the central tenants. Then ask students to determine which of the characters in the novel behaved in accordance with

the tenants of the religion. Make sure students cite page references to support their character behavior examples.

Strong Convictions

Have students write an opinion essay on whether they agree or disagree with the following idea spoken by Little Hawk near the end of the story: "Treasure your uncertainty then... Wrong choices come out of strong convictions that will not bend." Have students cite examples from the story or from current events to support their position.

Native Americans Language

As shown in *Ghost Hawk*, Roger Williams was known for his ability to speak several Native American languages. Have students learn about the many languages spoken in North America at the time the settlers arrived and compare this figure to the number of Native American languages spoken today. Students should also look up the number of native speakers then and now. Have students create a map to show the distribution of Native American language speakers from the past and from today.

U.S. States Names with Native American Origins

The names of many U.S. states are derived from Native American words, for example Massachusetts. Have students create a list of these states and have them explain the meaning of the state's name.

Life after Death

Little Hawk lives as a ghost through several hundred years. At one point he says, "I see much. And I wonder why I am left here to see, with no power at all to help the good or hinder the ill." Have students select several religions to study and have them determine whether the adherents of each religion believe in life after death. What does that life after death look like in each of the religions?

Plants

Susan Cooper currently lives on an island in a salt marsh and has said that the landscape that surrounds her daily provided her with inspiration for the story. Have students find all the plant references in *Ghost Hawk* and then ask them learn more about their physical appearance and ecosystem. (Make sure students learn about the bitternut hickory tree that grew around the tomahawk used by Little Hawk).

Native Americans in Advertising Today

Have students find examples of Native American images in product marketing today. Then, have them write an opinion essay as to whether the images and/or slogans depict Native Americans in a positive, negative, stereotypical, or idealized way.

Last Wild Indian in California

Have students learn about Ishi, the last living member of the Yahi tribe of California, who lived his last years at in the University of California's Museum of Anthropology. Ask students to write an essay on whether Ishi's treatment in the last years of his life was appropriate.

Treaties with Native Americans

Andrew Jackson wrote to President James Monroe in 1817, "I have long viewed treaties with the Indians as an absurdity not to be reconciled to the principles of our government." Discuss with your class the meaning of this quote and whether they agree with its content. Then, have students research the treaties between the U.S. government and the Native Americans that were ignored or violated by the U.S. Create a complete list of the treaties.

U.S./Indian Battles

Have students learn about and then compare and contrast the battles of Little Bighorn and Wounded Knee. What happened at each of these conflicts and what was the greater significance of each battle?

Another Website with Activities for the Book

For other helpful ideas, see the Simon and Schuster Guide, written by Pat Scales, retired middle and high school librarian,

http://d28hgpr8am2if.cloudfront.net/tagged_assets/12840_ghost%20hawk_cg.pdf?cp_typ e=enkl&rmid=20130925_KidsLibrary_Sept&rrid=3249321