

THE SECRETS OF SHADYWOODS

Discussion and Activity Guide

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Secrets of Shadywoods explores themes of moving to a new place, dealing with grief, making new friends, being honest, creative expression in art, going on adventures and caring for pets. The novel would be ideal for young readers, ages 9-11 and grades 4-5.

This guide is meant to facilitate meaningful discussions and learning in or out of the classroom. You, as the teacher or parent, are the expert on what will work best for your students, so feel free to choose or adapt the activities and discussion questions to fit your needs. All activities and questions in this guide are rooted in the Common Core Standards for ELA: Reading in Literature and Writing, and the applicable standards are provided at the end.

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Discussion and Activity Guide

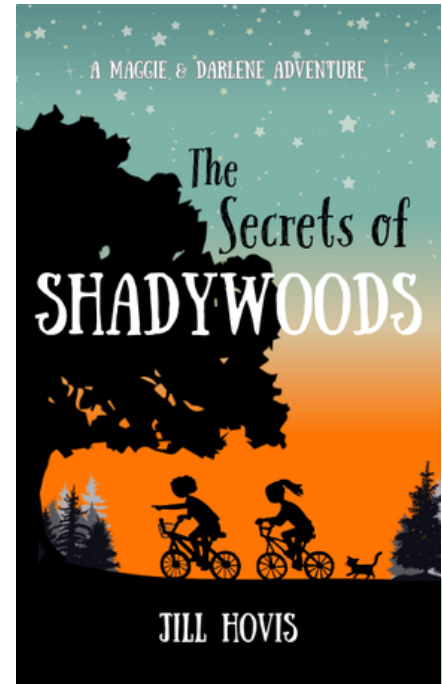
ABOUT THE BOOK

Young readers will love the adventures of Maggie and Darlene as they navigate the challenges of friendship, family and being brave. Filled with drawings from eleven-year-old Maggie's sketchbook, the heart and humor of The Secrets of Shadywoods comes to life in a fun-filled summertime tale.

When Maggie comes home on the last day of fifth grade, she's surprised to find Mom in an old VW camper in their driveway. She's even more surprised to hear they're selling their house and moving to a campground in Georgia! The summer of fun Maggie was anticipating with her friends is quickly turning into a big disappointment.

Her first day at the campground starts out as boring as Maggie expected, until she meets Darlene, a girl with lots of ideas for excitement. Life in the camper is cramped, so Maggie escapes to the woods everyday with her new friend. Searching for adventure, they discover that Shadywoods Campground is full of summertime fun... and secrets.

From a hidden treehouse and mysterious witch to the Snake Pit and Log of Death, the secrets are piling up, and Maggie can't tell anyone, least of all Mom. Can the girls keep up their secret adventures without Mom finding out, or will Maggie and Mom be driven apart by the biggest secret of all?



GRADES 4-5
AGES 9-11

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jill is a middle grade author in Hickory, North Carolina, and when she's not writing, you can find her with her husband exploring the Blue Ridge Mountains or spending time at home with their twelve rescue cats.

For more information about school or library visits, you can email Jill at jilltaylorhovis@gmail.com or visit jillhovis.com.



PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

The Secrets of Shadywoods

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions are provided for each chapter and can be used for whole class or small group discussions. They also can be used as writing prompts.

1. What do you notice about the front cover of *The Secrets of Shadywoods*? Where do you think the girls and cat are going? What time of day do you think is shown?
2. What are secrets? What does it mean to keep a secret? Do you think secrets are good or bad? Can you give examples? What do you think the “secrets” in this book could be?
3. Read the story description, or “blurb,” on the back of the book. What are some of the secrets at the Shadywoods Campground? What do you think the Snake Pit and Log of Death will be like?

ACTIVITIES

1. The cover of the book has silhouette images on the front. Discuss what silhouette means. Have the students create silhouette images. They could create a forest image to go along with the book.
2. Show kids images of old VW camper vans similar to Mom’s and Maggie’s.
3. Most of the adventures in the story take place at a campground. Talk about campgrounds with the students. Show them images, or have them research campgrounds. What do campgrounds look like? What types of activities are featured at campgrounds? Students could design an advertisement for an imaginary campground by creating a paper brochure or an internet “ad” using Canva, Google Slides, etc.
4. Reading Response Journals– Students could keep a paper or digital journal to write about the book throughout the duration of the unit. Have them divide each page into sections like the example below, then write in it for each chapter.

Vocabulary & Definitions	Figurative Language <i>page number, type, quote from text</i>
Discussion Question Responses	

CHAPTER 1

Big News

VOCABULARY

random

inspect

sing-songy

aisle

chucked

loft

crammed

burst

slowpoke

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. On the bus, Maggie asks Julie if she'd like to go to art camp with her. Do you think Julie wants to go? Use text evidence to support your answer.
2. When Maggie sees Mom waiting in the camper, she has concerns about what Mom might tell her. She says Mom's smile was "too shiny." What does she mean by that?
3. What was Mom's big news? How are Maggie's and Mom's feelings different about this news? How do you know?
4. Mom won't let Maggie get a cell phone until she turns 13. What do you think is the right age for getting a cell phone? Create a graphic organizer to tell the pros and cons of kids having their own cell phones.
5. Why is Maggie's stuffed animal, Ruby, special to her? How can you tell? Why do you think she feels that Mom probably thought she was too old to take Ruby with her?
6. Describe Maggie's last morning at her house. How do her thoughts and actions illustrate her feelings about leaving her home?

ACTIVITIES

1. Mom gives several reasons for wanting to move, and Maggie gives several reasons for wanting to stay. Have students practice their debating skills. Divide students into groups and assign them opposing positions on a topic of your choice. Allow them time to take notes defending their positions. Then host a class debate.
2. On page 5, the author uses a simile to describe Maggie holding back tears. Ask the students to locate this description in the text. Have them add the page number and simile quote to their reading journal.
3. Maggie separates all her belongings into three boxes- one for keeping, one for donating, one for throwing away. Have students draw three boxes and the items they'd put in each. They should be sure to label the boxes and items. Then they write three paragraphs explaining why they sorted the items the way they did. One paragraph is about keeping, one is about donating, and one is about throwing away.
4. Maggie and Mom move from North Carolina to Georgia. Have the students locate the two states on the map. Talk about the answer to Maggie's question at the end of the chapter. "How long is it gonna take to get from North Carolina to Georgia?" Why does Maggie say it would take forever?

CHAPTER 2

New Girl

VOCABULARY

commotion

deserted

scrambled

crumpled

belted

abruptly

scuffed

whirling

promising

spied

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author includes an email from Maggie to Julie. Why do you think this email is included? Use text evidence to support your answer.
2. How does the illustration on page 10 add to the reader's understanding of the text?
3. How does Maggie describe the library and the game room? Would you describe it in the same way? Have you played ping pong or board games? What are your favorite games to play?
4. On page 14, Maggie "felt lost" and "like an acrobat on a tightrope." What does the author mean by these descriptions of Maggie's feelings? How do you know?
5. Why does Maggie sing the song from "Annie" on the swing? How does she feel when Darlene hears her singing? Do you have a favorite song? What is it, and why?
6. How would you describe the relationship between Darlene and her brother, Bradley? Why? Do you have any siblings? How would you describe your relationship with them? Why?
7. How do Maggie's feelings change from the beginning of this chapter to the end? Find a quote from the beginning and a quote from the end to support your answer.

ACTIVITIES

1. Maggie stays in touch with her friend, Julie, by email. Talk with the students about parts of an email or letter. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two. Have students practice writing emails and/or letters to you or others.
2. The author includes an illustration of the gameroom, but not the playground. Using descriptions from the book, create a detailed illustration of the playground.
3. Can students find the idiom on page 17? ("get on my nerves") Discuss its meaning, and have them add it to the figurative language section in their reading journals.
4. *The Secrets of Shadywoods* is written in close third-person point of view. This means that the story follows Maggie very closely and shows her feelings and thoughts. Readers can *infer* other characters' emotions and thoughts, but they can only know Maggie's for sure. Choose either the scene between Mom and Maggie in the camper or the scene between Darlene and Maggie at the playground. Rewrite the scene you choose from the other character's point of view, not Maggie's. Consider how that character experiences the events in the scene. You may write it in third-person or first-person.

CHAPTER 3

Something Cool

VOCABULARY

figured
pumping
furiously
ushered

slurps
clatter
framed
flinched

triumphantly
heave

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Maggie's email to Julie, she explains why they can't live with her grandparents, but have to stay in the camper instead. Which do you think would be better– to live in a tiny camper in the woods or to live in a crowded house with lots of family (including little cousins)? Why? Which do you think Maggie prefers? Why?
2. Describe Darlene's dog. If you didn't know what "snoozing" meant, name TWO ways that you could find out from page 22. Do you have any pets? If so, describe them. If you don't, then describe a pet that you would like to have.
3. How are Maggie's mom and Darlene's mom similar? How are they different? Use quotes from the story so far to explain your answer.
4. The girls ride their bikes on the trails in the woods, until they reach a No Trespassing sign at a fence. How does Maggie feel about crossing the fence? How can you tell? Why do you think she decides to cross? What would you have done? Why?
5. Maggie considers her silver watch to be a "prized possession." What does that mean exactly? Why is it her prized possession?

ACTIVITIES

1. Maggie and Darlene ride bikes to get around the campground. At one point they have to cross a busy street. Brainstorm some ways to stay safe on a bike. Ask the students if they think Maggie and Darlene follow all the safety rules. Students can make a poster or presentation about bike safety.
2. Have students look at the illustration on page 26. Discuss possible reasons why the author didn't show the tree house. Have students re-read the descriptions on pages 25 and 26 and draw what they think the tree house looks like.
3. Do you have any prized possessions? What are they, and why are they special to you? Write a three-paragraph essay– first paragraph describes the object(s), second paragraph describes who gave you the object(s) and when they gave them to you, and third paragraph tells your favorite things about the object(s) and/or why they are so special.

CHAPTER 4

Not Exactly a Lie

VOCABULARY

souvenir
fizzy
production

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author includes Maggie's emails to Julie, but does not include reply emails from Julie. Why do you think that is? Read Maggie's email on page 28. How can you tell that Julie IS writing emails to Maggie? Use text evidence to support your answer.
2. Maggie helps Mom at the camp store. Give at least three examples from the story of tasks that she does to help. How do you think she feels about working at the store? How do you think her mom feels about her help? Why do you think so?
3. Maggie decides not to tell Mom about the tree house. Why? If you were Maggie, would you tell Mom about the tree house? Why or why not?
4. Why does Maggie have a "funny feeling in her belly" on page 30?
5. The title of this chapter is "Not Exactly a Lie." Maggie tells herself that what she told Mom wasn't exactly a lie. Why does she think this? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
6. How are Bradley and Donny similar? How are they different? Use quotes from this chapter to illustrate their similarities and differences.
7. On page 32, Maggie "felt the heat rise in her face, and her ears started burning." How do you think she feels? Why?
8. Darlene tells Maggie that they are going to take a new way to the tree house, and it's going to be a surprise. How do you think they'll get there? Why?

ACTIVITIES

1. Have the students re-read Maggie's email at the beginning of this chapter. Then they can write Julie's reply email in response to Maggie.
2. There are lots of tasks that are part of the job at the camp store. Students can create a "help wanted" poster or advertisement for the job, complete with graphics, list of duties and pay.
3. The summer weather in Georgia is hot, and the girls are looking for ways to stay cool. Darlene has a surprise plan to accomplish just that. Have the kids work in teams to brainstorm new ways to keep cool in the summer heat. They could create designs for a new product, a new form of cooling transportation or a new place to go to stay cool. Have them create a presentation of their ideas, complete with labeled blueprints, budgets and advertising. The sky's the limit!

CHAPTER 5

Snake Pit

VOCABULARY

tramped	trickled	moat
plunged	scraggly	sprint
gully	braced	
ravine	emerged	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Darlene say that she hopes Maggie doesn't get a house anytime soon? Provide a quote from the text to support your answer. Would you feel the same way? Why or why not?
2. Describe a "gully." Use information from this chapter to support your answer. Draw a picture to go along with your description.
3. Why did the girls pass the trail "rising from the creek bed and going up the bank" mentioned on page 35? Why did Maggie want to keep going past it? Why did Darlene?
4. How does the illustration on page 36 add to your understanding of the text?
5. The girls wondered why someone would dump all the tires in the gully. What do you think? What could be a possible reason? Do you think there's a good reason to dump litter, such as tires, in the woods? Why or why not?
6. Maggie and Darlene decide to name the tree house the "Secret Castle of Shadywoods." Why do they choose that name? Use information from the text to support your answer.
7. The girls enjoy pretending during their adventures. What are some stories that they made up in this chapter? Describe at least two stories they made up. What did they pretend? What were they really doing?

ACTIVITIES

1. Maggie and Darlene search for crawdads in the creek by turning over rocks to see what they can find. Have the kids research animal life in a creek habitat, then draw a picture of a creek and its wildlife. Follow up with a written report or slides about one of the animals found there.
2. The girls pretended to be queens. Maggie wanted to be a fairy queen that does magic, and Darlene wanted to be a warrior queen with a sword. Discuss what each girl's choice shows about her personality. Have the students write about what kind of "king" or "queen" they'd pretend to be and then draw themselves like Maggie did on page 37. They could share with a partner or small group.
3. Discuss the discovery of the tires in the gully. Talk about pollution and its effects on wildlife and the environment. Students could create presentations encouraging others to take care of our planet. Presentations could be in the form of posters, speeches, slides or videos.

CHAPTER 6

The Witch

VOCABULARY

tattered	hunched	hovered
tapestries	casting	
rung	brambles	
crouched	peered	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who taught Maggie how to be an artist? What is one thing that she learned about drawing?
2. Why were the dragon's wings blurring in front of Maggie on page 42? Describe at least one other way Maggie's actions show her feelings in this chapter.
3. Why did Maggie feel like Dad's death was a big secret that she wasn't allowed to talk about? Use text evidence to support your answer.
4. What did the girls do when they got tired of being inside the tree house? What did they make, and what did they pretend?
5. Describe what happened to scare the girls after they crossed the pasture. What did they do? Would you have done the same thing?
6. How did the approaching storm affect the tone, or mood, of the scene on pages 44 and 45?
7. How does Darlene compare the witch to Medusa?
8. Where did Mom think the girls were that afternoon? What did Maggie say when Mom questioned her about the scratches on her legs? Why didn't Maggie tell Mom the truth?
9. Do you think Maggie believes the old lady is a witch? Do you think Darlene thinks she's a witch? Do you think she is? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

1. Have the students look at the illustration on page 40 and re-read the description of the items the girls kept in the tree house. The students could work independently or with partners to draw the inside of their own tree house and show the items they'd include inside. Then they write a description of their items and the reasoning for including each one. They could also name their tree house.
2. Partner students up. Give each pair a deck of cards and teach them how to play Rummy.
3. Students can do research on "tapestries" and create their own to decorate the classroom.
4. Maggie and Darlene cover the walls of their tree house with drawings of every magical creature they could think of. Students can choose one of the creatures mentioned in this chapter to research. Then they can create a slide presentation or art project to teach the class about their creature, its features, and its history.

CHAPTER 7

Mr. Muffins

VOCABULARY

restocking streaming
glimpse lounged
resistance
devoured

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is Julie planning to still take art in school next year? Why or why not? How do you think Maggie feels about that?
2. In her email, Maggie says, "Things are weird around here. But it's also pretty interesting." What do you think she means by that?
3. Personification is a type of figurative language in which human characteristics are given to an animal or object. Find an example of personification on page 50, and copy the sentence into your reading journal. Be sure to write what the author meant by the sentence.
4. How does Maggie compare the cat to her stuffed kitty, Ruby?
5. Why do Maggie and Mom think the cat must not belong to anyone? Give at least three reasons.
6. What types of things will Maggie have to do in order to keep the cat? Do you have any pets? If you do, what do you do to care for them?
7. What does Maggie name the cat? Why? Give at least two reasons for her name choice.
8. Why can't Darlene have a cat? Do you think she wants one? Why?

ACTIVITIES

1. Julie is going to take drama class, and Maggie plans to take art. What types of extra-curricular classes or activities are students involved in? They could research other classes or interests to pursue in the future and create a presentation. (ie. band, dance, art, drama, clubs, sports, martial arts, etc.)
2. Mom tells Maggie stories about when she was in middle school. Have the students interview their adults (parent, family member, teacher) about their time in middle school. They could develop a list of questions to ask and record the answers, or simply write down a story that the adult tells.
3. Maggie is allowed to keep the cat because she is going to take care of him. Ask the students to create a visual display or brochure about the responsibilities of pet ownership.

CHAPTER 8

Swimming Lessons

VOCABULARY

shallow	mocked
tethered	shielding
sputtering	water-logged
cupping	flecks

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the scene at the lake by the time the girls and Mom got there. Have you ever been swimming in a lake? What was it like?
2. What's the question that Maggie always asks Mom when they went to the lake? What's always Mom's answer? What are the reasons she gives for her answer?
3. Is Darlene a good swimmer? How do you know?
4. Hyperbole is a form of figurative language that is an exaggeration so dramatic that no one would believe it's true. Find where the author uses hyperbole at the end of page 56. Write the sentence in your reading journal and describe what the author means.
5. Why did the girls stop their swimming practice and head to the beach for a break? Would you have reacted in the same way? Why or why not?
6. Find the paragraph on page 59 in which the author uses both a simile and a metaphor. What is she comparing? How does she compare them?
7. How have Maggie's feelings about life on the campground changed from the beginning until now? How have her feelings stayed the same? Use text evidence to support your answer.

ACTIVITIES

1. Maggie wants so badly to swim out to the dock, but she has to learn how to swim well, which takes a lot of practice. She sets a goal and works through steps to accomplish it, like putting her face underwater, practicing different types of swimming, and asking Mom for a float to help. Talk with the students about setting goals. Have them set a goal for something they really want to learn. They can brainstorm ways to practice and reach their goal. Have them write down their plan.
2. Talk about swimming safety. Students can research ways to stay safe while in the water. Put them in groups to create and perform skits about water safety.
3. Discuss similes and metaphors. Write random objects down on slips of paper, and put them in a container for students to draw from. Then challenge them to write both a simile and a metaphor using the object they select.

CHAPTER 9

Unwanted Guests

VOCABULARY

content	narrowed	gestured
rooted	fazed	shimmery
waggled	traitor	writhing
cackled	smirk	eerily

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do Maggie and Darlene feel about seeing the witch again at the tree house? Do they have the same feelings? How can you tell?
2. What precautions do the girls take with the tree house to keep it safe? What do you think they are concerned about?
3. How does Darlene pretend to cast a spell? Do you think she believes it will work? Why or why not?
4. Why do the boys follow the girls to the tree house? What does Bradley threaten to do? What deal does he make with Darlene?
5. Summarize the events that led to Bradley getting Maggie's sketchbook.
6. Why did Maggie get upset with Darlene? How did they make up? Do you think Maggie should have forgiven Darlene? Why or why not?
7. What's the Log of Death? Do you think the girls should go there? Why or why not?
8. What do the girls hear when they are coming down the ladder of the tree house to leave? What do they think it could be? What do you think it was?

ACTIVITIES

1. On page 66, there are descriptions of the drawings in Maggie's sketchbook. Ask the students to choose one of the descriptions and sketch what they think it looks like. Then have them share their sketches with classmates. Discuss the similarities and differences in student interpretations.
2. The boys and girls each have their own secret clubhouses- the "Secret Castle" and the "Log of Death." Ask students to write about their own secret clubhouses. If they don't have one, they can imagine one that they'd like to have.
3. The boys tell the girls a story about a "witch ghost" that lives in the woods. Share examples of kid-friendly ghost stories. Put the students in groups or with partners to read other fun ghost stories or to write and/or tell their own.

CHAPTER 10

The Log of Death

VOCABULARY

tidbit	gurgling
enormous	traipsed
uncertainty	exchange
adjusted	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Maggie mentions a “growing list of secrets” on page 71. Make a list of Maggie’s secrets so far. Do you think there will be more? Why or why not? Do you think she’ll ever tell Mom about her secrets? Why or why not?
2. How does the illustration on page 71 add to the reader’s understanding of the text?
3. How did Maggie leave the camper without Mr. Muffins following her? Why was she concerned about him following her?
4. Does Darlene’s mom know about the Log of Death? How do you know?
5. What does Bradley tell the girls that everybody has to do at the Log of Death? How does Maggie feel about it? Does Darlene feel the same way? Use quotes from the dialogue to support your answer.
6. Describe how each character swings out and crosses the log. How do you think you’d do if you took the challenge?
7. What did the siblings argue about on the trip back home? What was the deal they made?
8. What does it mean to call someone a “chicken?” Do you think it was important that Maggie prove she wasn’t a chicken? What would you do if someone dared you to do something or called you a chicken?

ACTIVITIES

1. In the beginning of the chapter, Maggie talks about what she misses from her old home. As time goes by, she’s learning that she likes some things about living on the campground, but still misses some things from NC. Make a chart to show what she likes in her new place and what she misses from her old one.
2. Put students into groups and have them create skits to act out the scenes from this chapter. Scene 1: Maggie and Mom in the camper. Scene 2: Maggie, Darlene, the boys and Sweetie at Darlene’s house. Scene 3: The kids and their trip through the woods. Scene 4: The kids at the Log of Death. Scene 5: The kids on their way home. Scene 6: The kids and Ms. Jeanette at the house.

CHAPTER 11

Stuck

VOCABULARY

hasty
scurried
cicadas

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Maggie want to keep Mom talking at the store? What did Maggie do to keep her talking?
2. What does Maggie mean when she thinks that “Mom’s face closed up and her smile turned too shiny like usual?” How did Maggie feel about that? How do you know?
3. How was Mom’s big sister, Maggie’s Aunt Beverly, similar to Darlene’s big brother, Bradley? What did Aunt Beverly think of Maggie’s Dad?
4. How did Mom react when Maggie told her that she missed Dad? Why do you think Mom reacted this way?
5. What did Mom warn Maggie to stay off of in the woods? Why?
6. How did Maggie end the walk on the trails? Why would she do that?
7. Why couldn’t Maggie hang out at the tree house later with Darlene?
8. In what three ways did Maggie feel “stuck?” Why did she feel that way? Do you ever feel that way? Why or why not?
9. How did Darlene cheer Maggie up? What do you do to cheer your friends up when they need it?

ACTIVITIES

1. Maggie and Mom hear the “weird buzzing sounds” of the cicadas in the woods. Have students research these insects to learn about their life cycles, noise-making and other interesting facts. Students could summarize their findings in a presentation and draw a labeled diagram of a cicada.
2. The boys built bike ramps on the trails. Students can learn all about force and motion by building mini-ramps (inclined planes) out of cardboard, then testing them with marbles or toy cars. See what happens when they change the angle or length of the ramp, the surface texture of the ramp or add weight to the cars. Be sure they work through the scientific method and record careful data.

CHAPTER 12

4th of July

VOCABULARY

squinted	hysterically	hoist	straining
hefted	insist	wafted	
pavilion	propel	treading	
hastily	retrieve	mucky	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the scene on page 86–87. Give examples of the descriptions the author provided that helped you picture the scene at the lake.
2. How did Maggie finally convince Mom to let her go out to the floating dock? Do you think that Mom should've let her go?
3. Why were the boys putting Sweetie in the boat? Was Ms. Jeanette concerned about them taking Sweetie out in the lake? Why or why not? Would you be concerned? Why or why not?
4. Why would the author describe how far away all the adults were when Maggie was on the floating dock? How was Maggie feeling about being out in such deep water? How do you know?
5. Describe Darlene's idea to help Maggie with jumping into the water. Would you jump from the dock?
6. Why did Maggie, Darlene and the boys decide to leave the dock and head back? Give at least three reasons from the text.
7. What was the "deflated piece of plastic" that Maggie was holding onto on page 92? Why do you think it was deflated? Support your answer with details from the text.
8. Summarize what happened after Maggie's raft deflated. Do you think Maggie was a strong swimmer? Why or why not? How was she rescued?
9. How did the adults react to the story of the deflated raft and the rescue? Why did Maggie try to "downplay the drama" when she talked to Mom about it?
10. During the fireworks show later, the girls spotted the witch on the hill nearby. What do they see and hear that make them think she's a witch? Do you think she's really a witch? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

1. The author uses several similes in this chapter. Have students locate at least three to write down in their reading journal and tell what each of them mean. You could also have them turn some of the similes into metaphors in their journals.
2. Students can rewrite the lake scene from Sweetie's point of view, including his thoughts and feelings about getting in the boat, jumping off the dock and rescuing Maggie.
3. Students could research fireworks: their history, how they are made, how they work and safety for their use. There are several videos and science experiments online for kids on the subject.

CHAPTER 13

One Last Time

VOCABULARY

shading	regained
receded	frenzy
gasped	matinee
scurried	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Hyperbole is a form of figurative language that is an exaggeration so dramatic that no one would believe it's true. Find where Maggie uses hyperbole in her email on page 96. Write the sentence in your reading journal and describe what she means.
2. Why does Maggie feel like she and Julie "barely know each other?" Have you ever felt that way about a friend? Why?
3. Maggie tells Darlene that Mom has been "kinda different" since they moved to the campground. In what ways does Maggie feel that Mom is different? How has Mom changed from before they moved to now?
4. How did Maggie get the idea to go to the movies? What does she say Mom's answer of "we'll see" means?
5. Who did they see on the pathway under the tree house? What was the girls' reaction? Do you think that they should have reacted differently? Why or why not? How do you think they should've reacted?
6. Why does Maggie say that they have to go back to get their things?
7. Mom overhears the girls talking about the witch. What was Maggie's explanation when Mom questioned them about their conversation? What did Mom say about Maggie's explanation?
8. Why did Maggie have trouble meeting Mom's eyes?
9. The chapter title is "One Last Time." What is the title referring to? What are they doing one last time?

ACTIVITIES

Give each student small sticky notes. As students read, they should make notes like the following:

- a. Next to places that they don't understand, they can write a question.
- b. Next to places that they relate to, they can write the way in which they relate. (ie. "I felt this way when...")
- c. Next to places that surprised them, they can write why they were surprised.

They should try to make at least one note per page, but they can do more. Once everyone is done reading, pair students to have discussions based on their sticky notes.

CHAPTER 14

The Plan

VOCABULARY

blinding	rehearsed	gnarled
flickering	casting	sauntered
rummaging	kibble	knelt
squirmed	cringed	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Maggie feel that there was something magical about going to the movies? Use details from the text to support your answer. Do you feel the same way about the movie theater as Maggie? Why or why not?
2. Why was Maggie having a hard time paying attention to the previews? What did the author mean by saying “Maggie’s imagination ran wild?”
3. When they returned to the campground, Maggie’s stomach “twisted in knots.” What does that mean? Why does she feel that way? Have you ever felt that way? Why or why not?
4. Summarize the girls’ plan. Was their plan successful? How do you know?
5. The girls arrived at the tree house in the late afternoon. Why did the girls get a later start than they intended?
6. How were Maggie and Darlene feeling at the tree house while they were going through with their plan? How can you tell?
7. While Maggie was waiting at the base of the tree for Darlene, there was a rushing sound. Something was coming toward her through the woods. What did you think it was? What do you think Maggie thought it was? What was it really?
8. Refer back to chapter 3, when Maggie and Darlene first arrived at the tree house. Compare their feelings and actions at the tree house in chapter 3 to this chapter. How are their feelings and actions different from their first arrival to their final departure?

ACTIVITIES

1. Maggie loves the movie theater and describes it as a magical place. Have each student write about a place that they love and think of as magical. Start with a bubble map graphic organizer, where they write the place in a circle in the center, then things they love about it in the surrounding circles. They can use this organizer to plan a 4–5 paragraph essay about their favorite place and what makes it “magical.”
2. Previews are one of Maggie’s favorite parts about the movies. Have the students divide into teams and create movie previews for *The Secrets of Shadywoods*. They could write a preview script and perform it for the class or make a video of their preview.

CHAPTER 15

Busted

VOCABULARY

plodded tenants
acres shuffled
scanning
clipped

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Hyperbole is a form of figurative language that is an exaggeration so dramatic that no one would believe it's true. Find where Maggie uses hyperbole on page 109. Write the sentence in your reading journal and describe what the author means.
2. What reasons did Maggie give for opening the cooler door so many times? Why was she really opening the door?
3. As the witch talks to Mom, Maggie thinks she sounds less like a witch and more like a "regular old lady." Why? What does the lady want?
4. Where is the lady moving, and why?
5. What is the lady's explanation for the tires in the woods? What is her concern? What do the girls call this pile of tires?
6. Maggie crosses her fingers for luck as the lady talks to Mom. Why does she do this? Does it work? What are some other superstitions about luck?
7. How does Maggie feel about facing Mom after the lady leaves? How do you know? Describe a time you have felt this way.

ACTIVITIES

1. At the beginning of this chapter, Maggie makes different attempts to stay cool in the heat. She mentions ceiling fans, a breeze through a screen door, going into the store cooler and air conditioning. Mom suggests eating ice cream to cool down. This would be a fun time to try your hand at making ice cream in a bag with your students. There are several online resources for this experiment.
2. Students can create a "For Rent" flyer advertising the lady's house. Use details from the description on page 111. Draw a floorplan of the house. Research online to find out the average rental rates of a house that size in a rural area of Georgia (the setting of this story) or in your area.

CHAPTER 16

Grounded

VOCABULARY

apparently
forbid
flitted
strained

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Maggie say to argue with Mom about being at the tree house? Did Mom believe that Mrs. Thompson was a witch? Did Maggie believe it anymore? How do you know?
2. Maggie said that she had not been exactly lying to Mom. Why did she say that? Do you think she had been lying? Why or why not?
3. Why did Maggie not want Mom to tell Darlene's mom? What was Maggie worried about? Why did Mom decide to tell Darlene's mom?
4. What did Maggie mean when she thought that the birds' "joyful chirps" seemed "out of place," or "maybe it was her that was out of place?"
5. What did Mom say Maggie's consequence would be for lying? What were other consequences of her lying? Use details from the text in your explanation.
6. What did Maggie "long for" that evening after dinner? Where was Mom? What does it mean that "things were still strained between them?"
7. Mr. Muffins didn't come home for dinner that night. Where do you think he could be? Why?

ACTIVITIES

Have a mock trial in the classroom for Maggie. Students can take the roles of characters such as Maggie and Mom, as well as attorneys, witnesses, jury members and a judge. There are many excellent online resources for conducting a mock trial in the classroom, and this part of the story lends itself well to such an activity.

CHAPTER 17

Search Party

VOCABULARY

yowling	clearing
pacing	perched
traces	situated
ditching	sprawled

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How were Maggie's and Darlene's consequences similar? How were they different?
2. Was Darlene upset with Maggie for Mom's phone call? How can you tell? Use quotes from the text to support your answer. If you were Darlene, would you have been upset with Maggie? Why or why not?
3. What reasons does Darlene give for going to look for Mr. Muffins right away?
4. A moral dilemma is when a person has to make a difficult choice. Both options have consequences, but a choice has to be made. What is Maggie's moral dilemma on page 120? What does she choose? What would you choose? Why?
5. How did Maggie lose Darlene in the woods? Where does she find her? Who else did they find there?
6. Why did Maggie decide to call Mr. Muffins to walk across the tires? Was that a wise choice? Why or why not?
7. Acting impulsively means to do something without much thought. What did Darlene do that was impulsive on 123? What happened as a result of her impulsive decision?
8. Why did Maggie decide to go to Mrs. Thompson's house for help? Do you think Maggie was being brave? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

1. In this chapter, Maggie and Darlene go on a quest to find Mr. Muffins. Tell students that a quest is a search for something. This can be an item, a power or an experience. Generate example of quests in children's movies and books. Have students write their own quest stories or skits.
2. Have kids explore balance and gravity with games like Jenga or activities like building a tower with playing cards. They could also experiment with challenges such as working in teams to build the tallest towers possible out of plastic cups and popsicle sticks.

CHAPTER 18

The Rescue

VOCABULARY

spanned	drawn	slack
eased	coiled	preferred
corridor	trickle	
threshold	threading	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is Mrs. Thompson different in this chapter than in chapter 6? How have Maggie's feelings changed about her?
2. What three items did Mrs. Thompson take from her house for the rescue? Why did she need each of these items?
3. Why did Maggie think "the old woman seemed more like a superhero than a witch?" Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Describe Mrs. Thompson's idea to use the rope to rescue Darlene.
5. What was Mrs. Thompson's prior profession? Do you think that her experience helped with Darlene's rescue? Why or why not?
6. Where had Mr. Muffins been for the last few days when he was missing?
7. Compare and contrast Ms. Jeanette's and Mom's reactions to the girls' misadventure in the tire pit.
8. Find the simile used on page 132. Write it in your reading journal, and tell what it means.
9. Maggie assumed that she and Mom would live in the camper "forever." How long do you think Mom planned for them to live on the campground? Use details from the text to support your answer.

ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss idioms with the class. Have them write about how they could apply the idiom of "don't judge a book by its cover" to this story. (Possible answers could include: judging Mrs. Thompson as a witch or judging living in a camper on the campground)
2. Mrs. Thompson created a pulley with the rope to rescue Darlene. Students could explore the use of pulleys with items, such as string or rope, and weighted objects, like books. There are many pulley experiments and demonstrations to be found online for kids.

CHAPTER 19

Moving Day

VOCABULARY

drapes
underfoot
flurry
bombarded

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some ways Mrs. Thompson's house has changed since she moved out? What are some ways that Maggie and Mom will change it now that they've moved in? Use details from the text to support your answer.
2. Why do you think Darlene wouldn't stay home, even with a sprained ankle?
3. Describe how Mom, Ms. Jeanette, and the boys all worked together on moving day. What did Maggie and Darlene do while the others worked together?
4. How did Maggie feel about having her own room and a new house? Use supporting details from the text.
5. In the past, Maggie felt like Dad's death was a big secret that she and Mom weren't allowed to talk about. How has that changed? Give examples from the text that show this change.

ACTIVITIES

1. Show students examples of floorplans of homes and discuss how to draw them. Then students can draw a floorplan of Maggie's new house based on details mentioned in the text.
2. Maggie and the other kids plan a big party. They brainstorm several activities for the event. Divide students into teams. Challenge each group to become event planners, and give them the job of planning a party for 20 guests. You could choose a holiday or themed event they should plan for. They can name their company, decide on group members' jobs or roles, and create party plans. They would need to create lists of supplies and a budget. They'd also need to consider event venues, activities, and food. Have them make a presentation of their plans to share with the class.

CHAPTER 20

Our Place

VOCABULARY

nestled belongings
spiral
beamed
secure

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Maggie's email to Julie, she writes, "It's funny how sometimes things that we think are gonna be so bad turn out to be so good." What does she mean? Give examples from the story.
2. Tell about a time that something you thought was going to be bad actually turned out to be good.
3. What happened to all the tires in the Snake Pit? Why?
4. What two classes are the girls planning to take together in 6th grade? What are their reasons for taking these classes? How do they feel about taking these classes?
5. What is the new name of their tree house? Why did they change the name? Which name do you prefer? Why?
6. The ending scene in this chapter is similar to the ending scene in chapter 1. Describe at least three ways the scenes are similar and at least three ways the scenes are different.
7. Mom and Maggie agreed that "this is gonna be great." What do you think they meant by that? What will be great? Tell how you know.

ACTIVITIES

1. Have students create a Venn diagram with three circles. Label each circle: camper, new house, tree house. Use these graphic organizers to compare and contrast these three settings in the book.
2. Set up an obstacle course like Maggie and Darlene will have in PE class. Have students run relays through the course. Students could also create their own obstacle courses.
3. Work with the class to come up with a name for the classroom, like how the girls named their tree house. Then have them create banner signs with the name to hang in the room. Make sure they incorporate items or characters that suit the classroom, like Maggie's banner did on page 141.

END OF UNIT ACTIVITIES

The Secrets of Shadywoods

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the story description, or “blurb,” on the back of the book. What do you think was the “biggest secret of all?” Explain your answer using details from the story.
2. Maggie draws pictures in her sketchbook to record events like a diary and to deal with her feelings. Have you ever drawn in a sketchbook or kept a diary? What do you do to deal with your feelings?
3. How has Maggie changed from the beginning to the end of the story? Use details from the book to support your answer.
4. How has Mom changed from the beginning to the end of the story? Use details from the book to support your answer.
5. How did Maggie’s and Julie’s relationship change from beginning to end of the story? How do you know?
6. Maggie met Darlene and had many adventures over the summer. How would Maggie’s story be different, if she never met Darlene? Give at least three examples.
7. Describe a time you moved to a new place, started a new activity, or met a new friend. Write a story to tell what happened and how you felt about it.

ACTIVITIES

1. Have students choose a scene from the book, then rewrite it in first person, from the perspective of a character other than Maggie.
2. Using details from the story, have students draw a map of the campground and surrounding area, including the roads, lake, campsites, office, game room, playground, camp store, woods with trails, empty pasture, tree house, Darlene’s house, Mrs. Thompson’s house, Log of Death, Snake Pit, and the creek. Hang their completed maps around the room for a “gallery walk” and discussion of differences and similarities.
3. Divide students into pairs or groups. Ask them to choose a favorite scene to read the dialogue aloud in either a simple reader’s theater or complete acted-out skit.
4. Share the lyrics to the song from the musical “Annie” that Maggie likes to sing (“Tomorrow” by Andrea McArdle). Play the song for students, and discuss the mood of the song and how it cheers Maggie up. Have students write an essay about their favorite song that cheers them up and why. You could also have them write their own cheerful song.
5. Using a blank story arc graphic organizer, have students plot the main story events. They could use sticky notes and put them on a large arc drawn on the board, or they could write them on a blank arc on a paper.
6. Students can work in teams to create a board game based on the novel. Their games should include the setting, characters, conflicts and plot. Take turns playing each other’s games.

ELA STANDARDS

Reading Standards for Literature

GRADE 4

Key Ideas and Evidence

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.
- Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Craft and Structure

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Medusa).
- Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose.
- Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Make connections between the text of a story and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.
- Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

GRADE 5

Key Ideas and Evidence

- Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how characters in a story respond to challenges; summarize the text.
- Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Craft and Structure

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
- Explain how a series of chapters and scenes fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story.
- Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).
- Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

ELA STANDARDS

Writing Standards

GRADE 4

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

- Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
- Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition).
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Draw evidence from literary or texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- Apply grade 4 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions]").

GRADE 5

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

- Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
- Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
- Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- Apply grade 5 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or a drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., how characters interact]").