



A Standards-Aligned Educator Guide for Grades 3 - 7

THE GRIFFINS OF CASTLE CARY

About the book:

Siblings Meg, Will, and Ariel Griffin are off on an adventure! They can't wait to spend a week visiting their eccentric aunt and her giant, tongue-drooling Newfoundland dog in England. But when they finally arrive, they're faced with a few local secrets that stir up more than a little trouble.

Add in some very peculiar lights, strange new friends, a police chase and some stampeding sheep, and the Griffin kids are in over their heads—literally. Apparently this town has a ghost problem and the three children must race to solve the mystery before the ghosts take something that doesn't belong to them.

Age Range: 8 - 12 years
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About the author—Heather Shumaker:

Heather Shumaker writes books for children and adults. She began writing books in elementary school and is now an award-winning author of several books for adults. *The Griffins of Castle Cary* is her first book for children.

Before she became an author, Heather tried many jobs, including: milk maid, sailor, llama trek guide and fire crew. She also lived at the South Pole and sorted garbage and recycling in Antarctica. Heather now lives in northern Michigan with her husband and two children. Learn more about Heather at www.heathershumaker.com.



Pre-Reading Discussion:



Consider the illustration on the book jacket:

- Describe the scene depicted in this illustration. Where are the children seated? Why is the space they're gazing into illuminated so brightly?
- Notice the use of color and tone in the background. Predict what the blowing leaves and dark clouds suggest about the story.
- Closely consider the house featured behind the tree. Determine how it is both similar and different than yours.
- Look closely at the children. How old are they? How are they related? Tell what the youngest child is holding in her arms. Why is she smiling while the others seem surprised?
- Predict what this story is going to be about.

Post-Reading Discussion:

"If you kids get into trouble," said Aunt Effie, "just look for Uncle Ben. These Newfies are known for saving children. Great protectors" (pg. 16).



- *Foreshadowing* is a technique used by authors in which they quietly suggest the events that will take place as the story progresses. Examine the citation above. State how the quote predicts Uncle Ben's role in the story.
- Newfoundlands are known as "Nanny dogs", in that they are devoted, kind, and have a special affinity for children. Consider how the author personified the breed's innate nature, to the point that Uncle Ben serves as an important character in the story.
- Analyze Uncle Ben's orientation and depiction on the book jacket illustration. Discuss how the illustration serves as foreshadowing for the story.

"Let's pretend we're sisters." She always wanted a sister closer to her own age. An everyday playmate, like Will was to Meg (pg. 54).

- Examine Ariel and Kay Kay's fast friendship. Consider their emotional similarities.
- The term *longing* means strong desire, yearning, or wish. Discuss the sense of longing both girls possess.
- Later in this scene, Kay Kay dramatically shatters a china tea cup decorated with an image of angel (pg. 55). Discuss how this action symbolizes Kay Kay's role in the story.

Normally, Ariel would have run after her brother and sister, but today she was waiting for this moment.
Hoping to be alone (pg. 133).

- At this point of the story, no one else knows about Kay Kay but Ariel. This scene is told from Ariel's *point of view*, revealing thoughts and emotions that are unique to her character. As a reader, knowing that Kay Kay is dangerous, consider how describing this scene in Ariel's point of view creates suspense.
- Notice that the author shifts points of view throughout the story. Identify places in the text where these shifts have been made. Discuss how telling the story from varying points of view affects your emotional connection with the plot.

As they watched, the ghost child wrapped her body over Ariel and stroked her arms.
Or was she tugging on them (pg. 200)?

- Will's eyes fill with tears as he witnesses Kay Kay's efforts to pull his sister to her death. Identify with the desperation he feels in this scene.
- Will typically experience hiccups when in the presence of ghosts. Explain why he does not have them in this scene.
- At the end of this scene, Meg tells Kay Kay, "I don't care how lonely you are. You can't take my sister" (pg. 211). Consider how Meg's ability to empathize with Kay Kay, yet affirm her devotion to Ariel, empowered her to be able to emotionally connect with the spirits haunting Castle Cary.

Kay Kay was shining as only a child who's been seen and treasured can do (pg. 288).

- What does it mean to be *seen and treasured*? Tell how and why feeling this way caused Kay Kay to become radiant.
- Consider how Ariel's gift of the doll was both a sacrifice and a blessing.
- Later, Meg becomes aware of the fact that, though people can live close together, they might not really notice each other (pg. 295). Explore the meaning of this statement as it relates to the story and, perhaps, in your own life.

Vertical Puzzle Answers (puzzle found on following page)

G o r s e
 v e n e r a b l e
 s t i l e
 G r i f f i n
 N e w F o u n d l a n d
 g a m b o l i n g
 l o n g i n g s
 c u r a t e
 h e d g e r o w s
 t r e a s u r e d

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

Reading Literature: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.4, RL.5, RL.7, RL.10

Speaking & Listening: SL.1, SL.2, SL.4, SL.5



Guide created by Debbie Gonzales, MFA



Vertical Puzzle

Use the clues at the bottom of the page to solve the puzzle below. Answers to the puzzle can be found on page 2 of this teacher guide.

1. G _____

2. _____ R _____

3. _____ I _____

4. _____ F _____

5. _____ F _____

6. _____ I _____

7. _____ N _____

8. _____ A _____

9. _____ G _____

10. _____ E _____

1. A spiny yellow-flowered European shrub (pg. 50)
2. Well-respected, especially because of age, wisdom, or character (pg. 63)
3. A series of steps constructed to allow humans, not livestock, to pass through (pg. 27)
4. Meg, Will, and Ariel's family name (pg. 6)
5. Breed name for a large working dog (pg. 15)
6. To run or jump about playfully (pg. 50)
7. A yearning desire (pg. 69)
8. A member of the clergy (pg. 79)
9. A hedge of wild shrubs and trees, typically bordering a road or field (pg. 63)
10. Highly valued, prized, loved (pg. 288)

