



Teacher's Guide for
***Midnight in Lonesome Hollow:
A Kit Mystery***

By Kathleen Ernst

American Girl (2007)

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Synopsis

Kit is visiting Aunt Millie in 1934. When a professor arrives to study Kentucky mountain traditions, Kit is thrilled to help with her research—until it becomes clear that somebody doesn't want “outsiders” nosing around. Kit decides to find out who's making trouble...even if it means venturing into Lonesome Hollow in the dark of night.

Activity Suggestions

Note: Kentucky (KY) Core Content Standards refer to 4th grade curriculum; Wisconsin (WI) Model Academic Standards refer to 4th grade curriculum; National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Curriculum Standards refer to early grades; International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English (IRA/NCTE) Standards refer to the general standards for English Language Arts.

1. Ask students to list examples of some of the ways that characters in the novel “made do” when confronted with scarcity. (Examples include growing food instead of buying it at a store, making baskets, gathering wild food, “holing up” food rather than buying canning jars, using discarded glass bottles as artwork, using newspaper for insulation and art on cabin walls.)
 - KY Standards for Reading: 2.0.2, 2.0.7
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 3.1.1
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.2
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 1, 3
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 1.d, 4.g, 7.a
2. Professor Vanderpool was interested in basketry because, as people began using pails and paper bags to carry things in, she thought it might be a “dying art.” What examples can students find in their community of skills that are being replaced or made obsolete by technology? How have those changes affected the people who made, owned, or used the items or skills?
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: B.4.8
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 7
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 2.b, 8.a

3. Professor Lucy Vanderpool was a folklorist. As she explains on pp. 21-22, *folk* means people and *lore* has to do with all the knowledge and traditions people pass down to others. Guide students through a folklore project of their own by asking them to interview an adult about a topic or activity that interests them. What do they learn? What are the best ways to document what they learn? Ask students to present their project to the class.
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: C.4.1, F.4.1
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: E.4.11
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 4, 7
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 1.c

4. When students have completed the book, ask them to recall several examples of times when a character confronted difficult personal choices because of the Great Depression. (Examples include Harlan deciding to quit his job in the mine and undertaking the riskier enterprise of harvesting wild ginseng, men moving away from their family in order to find work, Roy's father pretending to be dirty and hungry so he could get a job he desperately needed.) What would students have done in these circumstances?
 - KY Standards for Reading: 2.0.2, 2.0.7
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 3.1.1, 3.2.1, 3.3.1, 3.3.2
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.2, A.4.3
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 1, 2
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 1.d, 4.g

5. Ask students to look in the novel for examples of ways in which the Great Depression influenced rural Kentucky citizens' independence and interdependence with other communities, states, the nation, and the world. (Examples include coal miners digging coal that provided electricity in distant states, Harlan digging ginseng for the Asian market, Fern recording music that would be played in other regions and states, Mrs. Skidmore producing baskets.) How do these examples compare with examples from the students' community?
 - KY Standards for Reading: 2.0.2, 2.0.7
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.3
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.2, A.4.3
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: A.4.7, B.4.9, D.4.3
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 1, 3
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 9.a, 9.b

6. Lead a discussion: How did geographic features affect life in the fictional community of Mountain Hollow? What challenges and advantages did it present? How did 1930s life in the mountains compare with life in other parts of Kentucky, the region, the nation?
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 4.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.2.1, 4.3.1, 4.1.1, 4.4.2
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: A.4.4
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 1.d, 3.h, 3.k

7. Provide lyrics of local folk songs for your students to analyze. What do the lyrics say about the history and culture of their community, region, or state?
 - KY Standards for Reading: 2.0.3, 2.0.7, 3.0.3
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 5.2.1
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.3
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: E.4.11
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 1, 2, 3
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 2.d

8. Some of the local people in this book welcomed visitors; some did not. Lead a discussion: Were Mrs. Skidmore, Roy, and Harlan justified in their dislike of outsiders? Were Kit and Professor Vanderpool acting appropriately when they collected and documented some of the folklore they encountered in the mountain community? If someone with good intentions creates conflict, how can that conflict be addressed and resolved?
 - KY Standards for Reading: 2.0.2, 2.0.7
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 2.3.2
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.2, C.4.3
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: B.4.9, C.4.1, E.4.7, E.4.9, E.4.14
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 1.b, 1.d, 2.a, 4.e, 4.g, 5.d, 9.a, 9.b

9. After students have read the novel, return to the scene on pp. 122-125, when Harlan is questioning Fern and Kit. Discuss the conversation with students. Why was Harlan angry with the girls for following him? Why does he accuse Kit of causing trouble? Kit and Harlan have different opinions about Kit's actions—do students think both are justified? Which comments made in the argument are facts; which are opinions? Can students recall from their reading how the conflict between Kit and Harlan is resolved?
 - KY Standards for Reading: 3.0.1, 3.0.2, 3.0.4, 3.0.5, 3.0.6
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.2, A.4.3, C.4.3
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: E.4.7, E.4.9, E.4.14
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 1.b, 1.d, 2.a, 4.g, 5.d, 9.a, 9.b

10. Ask students to visit www.kathleernerst.com and follow the Books link to the *Midnight in Lonesome Hollow* page, and then on to “The Story Behind the Story.” Ask them to analyze the steps the author took to research the book, and to list examples of primary and secondary sources used. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using each type of source when conducting research?
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 4.5.1
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: E.4.1
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: B.4.1
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 8
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 2.c, 2.d

11. Ask students to visit www.kathleernerst.com and follow the Books link to the *Midnight in Lonesome Hollow* page, and then on to “The Story Behind the Story.” Ask each student to choose one of the historical photographs, and then to imagine that they are one of the people pictured in their photograph. Guide them through an imaginative writing exercise from the point-of-view of that individual. For example, they might write a diary entry or letter; they might write a descriptive poem about that moment in time, using strong sensory details; they might imagine a conflict they are having with another person in the photograph (or just offstage), and write a section of dialogue or even a short story about that.
 - KY Standards for Writing: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.2, 2.3.2, 2.4.2, 3.5.2
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: B.4.1, E.4.1
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 4, 5, 6

12. Guide students through a project researching the Great Depression’s impact on their own family or community. Ask students to brainstorm different types of research they can use to learn more about this topic. You may wish to have the students work in small groups to create focus questions, conduct research, and plan a presentation to the class.
 - KY Standards for Social Studies: 5.1.1
 - WI Standards for Language Arts: A.4.4, C.4.1, F.4.1
 - WI Standards for Social Studies: B.4.1
 - IRA/NCTE Standards for English Language Arts: 7, 8
 - NCSS Standards for Social Studies: 2.c, 2.d, 5.g, 6.c

For Further Exploration

A factual and colorful exploration of many of these themes can be found in *Welcome to Kit’s World: Growing Up During America’s Great Depression*, by Harriett Brown (Pleasant Company Publications: Middleton, WI, 2002).

The National Archives provides good information to help educators and students access online resources. <http://www.archives.gov/education/>

The Library of Congress also provides a wealth of information for teachers and students. Information, photographs, audio files, teaching plans, and more can be found in the Great Depression collection. <http://www.loc.gov/search/greatdepression.html>

Author Presentations

Kathleen Ernst offers a variety of programs and presentations for student audiences. Information can be found on her website, www.kathleernerst.com.