

YHBA Novel Resource #3
The Great Sockathon

I. Book Information:

Author: Michael Delaney
Title: The Great Sockathon
Copyright date: 2004
Publisher: Dutton Children's Books

II. About the Author:

Michael Delaney goal in writing is to appeal to both young and old readers. He is the son of a stock broker and an artist, and lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, with his wife and daughter. Michael comes from a family of writers for children; his mother, brother, and sister all have written and/or illustrated books for children.

When writing, Michael has a very regular routine that consists of jogging, then fixing breakfast for his daughter, showering, and then writing. Michael began to write because he felt he was not very articulate and later wrote things that he wished he had said to show that he was actually a very witty person. Michael attended New York University and received a B.A., English, in 1977.

**No
Photo
Available**

Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2007. Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2007.
<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>

Author's webpage address: none available

Author's e-mail address: none available

Publisher's webpage: <http://us.penguinroup.com/static/html/aboutus/contactus.html>

Author's connection to the book:

This story takes place in Connecticut

Other books by same author:

Deep Doo-Doo,
Birdbrain Amos,
Not Your Average Joe,
Henry's Special Delivery
The Marigold Monster
Not Your Average Joe
Deep Doo-Doo, and the Mysterious E-Mail

III. Annotation:

Four best friends Sabrina, Megan, Connie, and Daisy tell this story which is about what they thought would be a very relaxing summer. In reality they find themselves involved in a plan to help save the 275-year-old balm of Gilead tree that is located on the town green. Sabrina is the first one contacted by the ghost of Eliza Bake who died when she fell out of the tree when she and her friend climbed the tree in 1932 to Herbert Hoover give a speech.

The girls feel that the ghost lives in old balmy and they find out that the tree is rotting and the town is doing nothing to save it. They come to the aid of the tree and organize a sockathon, and original fundraising scheme to sting a sock chain from one end of town to the other, in order to purchase a brace to help prolong the life of the tree.

The four girls get help from their minister who gets them to talk to the mayor of the town to plan the event. As the girls work hard during the summer to raise money to save the tree the mystery surrounding Eliza's death unfolds and they realize that Mrs. Campbell has a very strong connection to Eliza.

The tree blows over during a very strong storm and the girls use the money that they have raised to plant dogwood tree in its place. During the planting ceremony the ghost of Eliza Baker seems to wave goodbye and send a sign to the four girls and Mrs. Campbell. This is a great story about friendships and community.

IV. Booktalk:

Is it possible for a tree to be haunted? Four best friends think that they are going to spend the summer relaxing after a year of school that is until one of them hears a very eerie voice that seemed to come from the tree in the town green. The tree was over 275 years old and the girls had many things that they need to learn before the end of the summer. The four friends join forces to try and save the tree, but is that the only thing they must save?

V. Characters

Main	Traits
Sabrina: age 11	A middle school girl with a close circle of friends. She was the first one to hear the ghost of Eliza Baker, and her mother is making her read several books this summer. She has a strong desire to help people and usually likes to do the right thing and usually loves to kid around. Her mother is always trying to make Sabrina a better person.
Megan: age 11	An African American middle school girl with a great circle of friends. She and her mother visit her Great Aunt Carrie weekly and Megan hates this. Her mother works for a radio station and Megan hates all of the publicity that goes with that. Her parents are divorced, and her mother is very concerned about money.
Connie: age 11	She is of Chinese descent and is adopted. She is the smallest of her great circle of middle school friends. Her parents are about to adopt another baby from China, and she loves ghost stories and knows a lot about ghosts. She has a news paper route.
Daisy: age 11	A middle school girl with a close circle of friends. She is a big and loud girl, and is not the most intelligent of the girls.
Supporting	Traits
Mrs. Campbell	Was Eliza Baker's best friend in 1932 and she has felt a certain amount of guilt about not being more helpful to Eliza when she fell out of the tree. Mrs. Campbell is a very out spoken old woman who is very demanding and does not hold much regard for the youth of today.
Eliza Baker	She is eleven years old in 1932 and a very determined, headstrong girl that eventually becomes a ghost.

VI. Conflict:

The main conflict in this novel is that the girls are trying to save Old Balmy, a 275-year-old balm of Gilead tree, for the city which is not funding a support brace that would prolong the life of this legendary tree. **This conflict is an external conflict; character vs. character.**

Another conflict that is going on during the entire book is that three of the girls have had a supernatural encounter with Eliza Baker, a ghost of a young girl who died when she fell out of the tree. **This is an external conflict; character vs. nature/character/ghost.**

VII. Conflict Resolution:

The conflict in this novel is resolved Old Balmy falls down during a storm, main conflict, and the ghost of Eliza Bakers seems to leave when a new dogwood tree is planted in the village green.

VIII. Genre:

The genre of this novel would fall under:

Contemporary Fiction
Supernatural Fiction
Family Fiction
Friendship Fiction
Multiple voice narrative

IX. If you like this book, you'll love these:

Escape to West Berlin by Maurine F. Dahlberg
The World According to Humphrey, by Betty G. Birney
Rockwell: A Boy and His Dog by Loren Spiotta DiMare
Funerals and Fly Fishing by Mary Bartek

Recommended books by the same author:

The Marigold Monster
Not Your Average Joe

X. Levels:

IL: 4-7
RL: 3.9
LEX: 630

XI. Read-Aloud passages:

Chapter 1, page 6

"I didn't want to climb the tree. It made me uneasy. It seemed wrong somehow.....
This passage reveals the true death of Eliza Baker.

Chapter 2, page 11

"I had heard that the old balm of Gilead tree on the village green was haunted. Everyone had heard *that*. In New Elder, the town ...
This passage introduces the reader to the main setting and conflict of the book.

XII. Setting:

The setting of this novel is during the summer in New Elder, Connecticut, 2003.

XIII. Point of View:

This is a first person narrative that is told through the four different voices of the central characters.

XIV. Theme:

The theme of this novel is that it is always good to give back to the community and that there is very little stronger than true friendship which can endure all things.

One interpretation of the title is the girls think of an original way to raise money to save the tree, *The Great Sockathon*.