

Novel Resource #7

Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel

Author: Leslie Connor

Copyright date: 2004

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company

About the Author:

1. Interesting facts: Leslie Connor lives in Madison Connecticut.
2. Author's webpage: not available
3. Author's email and address: not available



4. Picture:
5. Other facts: Ms. Connor's shovel is found in her garden ready to weed even if she doesn't use it.
6. Other books written by author: Dead on Town Line, a novel

Annotation: *Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel* is Leslie Connor's first book. This picture book tells the story of a choice made by a woman leaving her homeland for a new world. The dark wood cut illustrations by Mary Azarian add to the dramatic tale of Miss Bridie's life and how her choice of a shovel creates opportunity to make a life for herself. Miss Bridie's shovel plays a role in every stage of her life. This is a wonderful look at the hardships endured by new settlers and the joys and sorrows of a life well-lived.

Book talk: If you could take just one item from your house when you moved, what would it be? Would it be a pet, a toy, a picture? Read this story about Miss Bridie and the choice she makes. The item she chose helped her many, many times in her life. (I would not give the title of the book because the students should think about what she might choose.)

Characters: Miss Bridie: She is hard working and resourceful, always using her shovel to make a living for herself. This shovel leads her to work, love, children, and more. She makes a wise decision as she bravely moves to an unknown land.

Conflict and Conflict resolution: Miss Bridie meets conflict throughout life: She needs a job, loses her farm and eventually her husband. Miss Bridie also finds joy in skating, flowers and hard work.

Genre: Realistic/historical Fiction

If you like: Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel, you will love:

Ellis Island: Doorway to Freedom by Steven Kroll

Yonder by Tony Johnston

Maisie by Alice Schutle

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco

A Piece of Home by Sonia Levitin's

The Lotus Seed by Sherry Garland

Interest level: grades 1-4

Reading level: 4.5

Setting: Miss Bridie moves from her homeland to New York City. She spends the rest of her life on a farm she and her husband buy. The land provides an opportunity to grow all that is needed.

Point of View: Omniscient

Theme: The theme of Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel is that choice and hard work can make for a wonderful, even if demanding, life. The title focuses on the choice that Miss Bridie makes. That choice becomes a focal point for her entire life and the path that it takes.

About the Illustrator: Mary Azarian

Interesting facts: Mrs. Azarian moved to a farm in the early 1960's. Because she was unable to completely live off the land, she turned to teaching. After her second child, Mary Azarian decided to find work that could be done at home. At Smith College, Ms. Azarian planned to study medicine until she took an art class under artist Leonard Baskin. At home, she again turned to art. Mary is trained as a printer and painter. Her first works, a woodcut print alphabet, was reproduced for all the classrooms in the state of Vermont by the department of education, but it took some time before her woodcuts were put into book form. Mary's first book, A Farmer's Alphabet, used these woodcuts. The farm is now the inspiration for most of her work.

Illustrator's webpage: <http://www.maryazarian.com/>

Other email or addresses: not available

Tara-Lynne Sinicki

HB MSS

tlsinicki@yahoo.com



Picture:

Illustrator's connection to the book: Much of Mary's inspiration for her work comes from the farm and the boys and animals she raises there. When Miss Bridie chose a reminder from home, she chose a shovel. This choice helped her in many stages of life. Miss Bridie dug a garden, holes for the posts to pen the animals, planted seeds for an orchard, planted flowers, fruit, and trees. The pictures for Miss Birdie Chose a Shovel mirror many activities from Mary Azarian's farm.

Other books illustrated by Mary Azarian: She has illustrated over 40 books. Tuttle's Read Barn by Richard Michelson, Here Comes Darrel by Leda Schubert, A Christmas Like Helen's by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock, and Kneeling Orion by Kate Barnes

Art Medium used: woodcuts

Students can understand how the art medium is created by: Studying Mrs. Azarian's art. Some pictures of her work are available on line and in galleries(See her website for samples). Students may also take a field trip to a printer's studio or massive publisher's warehouse. Although the process is different, one can compare the woodcut work to that of printing by machine.

The medium was chosen to convey the meaning of the story because: Mary Azarian first printing by hand and then on a 19th century Vandercook proof press. She began printing in black and white and then added color. She has her own technique of adding color with water based paints rather than with individual color blocks. Mary has returned to doing black and white prints with color for a bold look. This echoes the bold move that Miss Bridie makes from her homeland to America.

Across the Curriculum connections:

Subject area: Science

Activity: Brainstorm uses (common and uncommon) for household items
This activity can be done as a whole group, small group, or individual activity.

Resources/supplies: Household items such as a spoon, tea pot, straw, pencil, etc. and notebook for recording ideas.

Resources: Invention Convention manuals for lesson plans

<http://www.eduplace.com/science/invention>: This sight gives examples of student made inventions, ideas of how to hold an invention convention, and book resources.

Subject area: Literature

Activity: Compare other immigration stories to Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel. Discussions may take place in small group settings.

Resources: Scholastic Books gives ideas and book list:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/>

Coming to America Stories of Immigration: gives book lists for picture and fiction books. <http://www.warwicklibrary.org/bibimimming.htm>

Activities:

A. Brainstorming inventive ideas

Link to Indiana Academic Standard: See starred activities below

B. Compare other immigration stories to Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel

Link to Indiana Academic Standard: See starred activities below

Discussion Questions:

Before: If you could bring just one thing with you when you move from your home what would it be? Why?

During: Why was Miss Bridie's choice a good one? What uses did her shovel have? See pgs. 6, 8 and 9, 11, 12 and 13, 14, 16, 23 and 24, 25 and 26, 27.

After: What do you think happened to Miss Bridie's shovel when she died?

Language:

Word list to be defined:

Porcelain p. 1: a hard, breakable material

Flung p. 4: to swing or fling it onto one's back or shoulder

Root cellar p. 13: a dark place, similar to a basement with dirt walls and floors used to store vegetables and fruit for the winter

Buggy p. 14: a carriage to ride in pulled by horses

Quelled p. 21: stopped

Trudged p. 25: to walk with heavy, dragging feet

Indiana Academic Standards met by book:

Kindergarten:

Reading: k.1.22, k.3.2, k.3.3,

Science: k.1.2, *k.2.2 Draw pictures and write words to describe objects and experiences

Social Studies: k.1.1, k.1.3, k.3.5

First Grade:

Reading: 1.3.1, 1.3.2,

Science: *1.1.1 Observe, describe, draw and sort objects carefully to learn about them

Social Studies: 1.1.2

Second Grade:

Reading: *2.3.1 compare plots, settings, and characters presented by different authors, *2.3.3 Compare and contrast versions of same stories from different cultures

Science: *2.1.6 Use tools to investigate, observe, measure, design, and build things, 2.1.7, and 2.5.6

Social Studies: *2.1.1 Listen to historical stories and compare daily life in the past and present

Third Grade:

Reading: 3.3.1, 3.3.4, *3.3.7 Compare and contrast versions of the same stories in different cultures, 3.5.7

Science: *3.1.6 Recognize that and explain how an invention can be used in different ways such as radio being used to get information and for entertainment, 3.2.3, *3.2.5 Construct something used for performing a task out of paper, cardboard, wood, plastic, metal, or existing objects, 3.2.6

Bibliography:

<http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com> Houghton Mifflin Publishers

<http://www.carolhurst.com/index.html> Carol Hurst's Children's Literature site

<http://www.maryazarian.com/> Mary Azarian's website

<http://www.nccil.org/> National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature

<http://www.eduplace.com/science/invention/> Invention Convention

http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonplans/unit_ancestors_books.htm Scholastic books and ideas

<http://www.warwicklibrary.org/bibimmig.htm> Coming to America Stories

[www.perma-bound.com:](http://www.perma-bound.com/) for IL and RL

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/standards/welcom.html> Indiana Academic Standards

Tara-Lynne Sinicki

HBMS

Tlsinicki@yahoo.com