

# *The Ghost's Grave*

By Peg Kehret



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Peg Kehret is best known for her many acclaimed children's books. She has won several awards including the PEN Center Award in children's literature, the Golden Kite Award, and an award from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Her love of animals is seen by her inclusion of animals in the majority of her books, including the kittens in *The Ghost's Grave*. She loves to volunteer at her local animal rescue shelter, and her pets are rescued animals as well. Kehret lives in Washington State with her dog and two cats, which is the setting for *The Ghost's Grave*. For more information about the life of Peg Kehret and her books, visit her website at [www.pegkehret.com](http://www.pegkehret.com). She can also be reached by mail at P.O. Box 303, Wilkerson, WA 98396 or by e-mail at [pegkehre@tx3.net](mailto:pegkehre@tx3.net). She has written other well known books such as *Small Steps*, *Abduction*, *The Stranger Next Door*, *The Hideout*, *Spy Cat*, and *Nightmare Mountain* among others.

## **Annotation**

The summer Josh was dreading turned out to be one filled with excitement at every turn. Josh was sent to live with his eccentric old aunt, who he barely knows, when he would much rather be playing on the baseball team with his friends. Once he gets there though, he meets a ghost named Willie who asks him to dig up his leg from the cemetery. What is already considered a crime, leads to another mystery when Josh finds a box of money also buried in Willie's grave. Both Willie and Josh learn about unexpected friendships in this novel and Josh also gains a sense of responsibility caring for a stray cat and her kittens. This is a great read that hooks even the most apprehensive of readers.

## **About This Book**

Genre: Adventure/ Mystery

Point of View: First Person

Theme: Always be optimistic and don't ever give up.

Meaning of the title:

This title is very literal. Josh is asked to dig into a ghost's grave and that opens up a second story line in the book. Not only does the grave hold the answer to Willie's wish, but it holds the answer to a town's long time unsolved crime.

Setting: Carbon City, an old mining town in Washington State, in approximately 2005

### Conflict/Resolution

Josh must leave his friends for the summer to spend it with an aunt he's never even met. He doesn't think he could have anything in common with this old woman and he'll have nothing to do. However, he learns that bonds can form between kids and the elderly and there is a lot more to do in the old town of Carbon City than he thought.

### Characters:

Josh- 12 years old; adventurous, determined, quick-witted

Aunt Ethel Hodge – 82, Josh's step-dad's aunt; fiesty, lonely, friendly, strong-willed

Willie (Wilbur Martin)- A ghost; one-legged, scruffy looking, good friend, desperate

Stephen- Josh's step-dad

Mom- Josh's mom

Florence- a peacock who is named after Ethel's sister who died

Mr. Aaron Turlep- sneaky, criminal, mean, conniving

Mrs. Muriel Morris- A friend of Aunt Ethel's; caring, kind-hearted, loyal friend

Bruce- Josh's age, Mrs. Morris's grandson

Interest Level/Reading Level: Ages 8-12, 790 Lexile

### **Booktalk**

Do you believe in ghosts? Josh wasn't sure that he did until he met Willie, the ghost of an old coal miner. Josh was sent to live with his Great Aunt Ethel for the summer, which he thinks is going to lead to the most boring summer of his life. However, Josh soon meets Willie while out in an old tree house. Willie has a favor to ask of him. What kind of favor would a ghost have for a twelve year old boy? He wants him to dig up his leg, which was not buried with the rest of his body and rebury it with the rest of him. Will Josh go through with that, knowing it's against the law? He knows his mom and step-dad would definitely not approve.

Josh also comes across a stray cat that he is very fond of while spending time out in the tree house. He begins to feed it, against Aunt Ethel's wishes, and soon learns that this stray cat has kittens. Josh soon learns the responsibility of having to take care of and nurture these stray

animals. Will Josh be able to find a home for them before he leaves Washington State for the summer?

Carbon City has an unsolved mystery of some missing money that the town raised for an animal shelter. Josh learns that Aunt Ethel is not too fond of feeding strays because the fact that the animal shelter was not able to be built is still a hard subject for her to deal with. She and her sister gave a substantial amount of money to help in the cost, only to find out it was stolen within a couple of days. When Josh comes upon a metal case of money, could he help solve an ongoing mystery? Or can he survive what happens when the person who hid the money realizes that Josh has it?

**Anticipation Statements**

<b><i>Agree</i></b>	<b><i>Disagree</i></b>	<b><i>Statement</i></b>
		Ghosts can communicate with the living.
		It is okay to dig up a dead man’s limb from his gravesite.
		Summer is boring without television and video games.
		It is okay to not always tell the whole truth.
		Friendships can form between kids and the elderly.
		A community leader is always a trustworthy person.

**Discussion Questions:**

Pre-Reading:

- Using the title and cover, what do you think this book will be about?
- What do you think the setting of the book will be?
- Have you ever been to a cemetery? How do you feel when you’re there?
- Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?

Chapter 1:

- Why can’t Josh enjoy his welcome cake? (Pg. 13)
- How do you think Josh is feeling about the remainder of his summer with Aunt Ethel? What makes you think that? (Pg. 15)

## Chapter 2:

- Why are Josh's mom and Steven not excited when he tells them he's made the baseball team? (pg. 17 for inferencing, pg. 19 for comprehension)
- What makes Josh think that Aunt Ethel is not boring as he thought she'd be? (Pg. 22)

## Chapter 3:

- What do you think the scream is that wakes Josh up? (pg. 25)
- Why is the Peacock named Florence? Be specific. (pg.27-28)
- Knowing the title of the book, what do you think the connection will be between Florence (Aunt Ethel's sister) and Josh? (pg.31-32 )

## Chapter 4:

- Have you ever been out in the woods by yourself? How did it make you feel? (Pg. 37)
- Why do you think Aunt Ethel doesn't want a cat around the house? (pg. 41-42)
- Would you buy cat food even if you'd been told to not feed the cats? (Pg. 47)

## Chapter 5:

What caused Josh to be afraid of the tree house? What would you do if something like that happened to you? (Pg. 55)

## Chapter 6

- Why does Willie only have one leg? (pg. 64)
- Now that Josh has met Willie, what do you think he's going to do? (pg. 60)
- Should Josh tell Aunt Ethel about meeting Willie? Why or Why not? (pg. 60-65)
- Explain how Willie died. (pg. 67)

## Chapter 7

- After Willie tells Josh about his wish that was not fulfilled, make a prediction about what you think will happen next. (Pg. 71)
- Why wouldn't Willie go to see Florence (both the girl and the bird)? (pg.71-73)

## Chapter 8

- Now that Josh knows the stray cat has kittens, should he tell Aunt Ethel? (pg. 78)
- Why do you think Josh wants to read about the history of Carbon City? (pg.79)
- What do you think will happen while Josh is at the cemetery? (Pg. 88)
- Have you ever thought about doing something that you know is wrong, but you feel compelled to do it anyway? Explain how that made you feel. (Pg. 88)

## Chapter 9

- Why didn't Josh agree to help Willie that same day? (pg. 91)
- What makes Josh have second thoughts once they get to where Willie is buried?(p.93-94)

## Chapter 10

- What does Josh decide to take with him to the cemetery to calm his nerves? Why?(p.100)

## Chapter 11

- What money do you think Mr. Turlep is referring to? (pg. 108)
- How do you think Mr. Turlep and Josh are going to be connected in this story? ( Pg. 111)

## Chapter 12

- What has Josh found while looking for Willie's leg? (pg. 118)
- How does he know it's not the box he's looking for? (pg. 118)

## Chapter 13

- Josh says there is not a way to link him to Willie's grave. Can you think of any possible links Josh may have overlooked? ( Pg. 122)
- What did Willie want to use as a marker for his grave by the river? (pg. 127)

## Chapter 14

- Where do you think Aunt Ethel is? (pg. 132)
- What happened to her? (pg. 133)
- What seemed strange to Josh as they were leaving for the hospital? (pg. 136)

## Chapter 15

- What do you think Mr. Turlep will do when he finds his money is missing? ( Pg. 139)
- What makes Josh nervous on their way to the hospital? (pg. 141-142)
- Why does Josh come back to the house alone? (Pg. 151)

## Chapter 16

- How does Mr. Turlep make a connection between Josh and the missing box? (p. 152-153)
- Why did Mr. Turlep have a ski mask and gun at his apartment? (pg. 158)
- How does Mr. Turlep find Aunt Ethel's house? ( Pg. 159)
- If you were a store clerk and someone came in acting as Mr. Turlep, would you give that person directions to someone's house that you knew? Why or Why not? (Pg. 159)

## Chapter 17

- How does Josh realize that this money could be the stolen money for the Animal Shelter? (pg. 164-165)
- Who do you think is in the car that pulls in the driveway? (Pg. 171)

## Chapter 18

- What could Willie do to help Josh? ( Pg. 176)
- Explain how Willie and Josh work together to scare Mr. Turlep. (Pg. 176-178)
- Why would Willie leave Josh alone with Mr. Turlep? (Pg. 180-182)

## Chapter 19

- Why do you think Willie broke his own rule about not going places he'd never been when he was alive? (Pg. 186)
- How were the police able to prove that the money in Mr. Turlep's box was the money that had been stolen from the animal shelter? (Pg. 193-194)
- Would you have told the police and Mrs. Morris about Willie after they asked about the supposed ghost? Why or why not? (Pg. 195)

## Chapter 20

- Why won't Josh be seeing Willie anymore? (Pg. 202)
- How does Josh's mood change from the first letter he wrote to the last ones on pages 205 and 209?
- What lessons could be learned from Josh's summer experiences? (Pg. 210)

## Language

Ageism – Pg. 4, judging a person by their age

Erratically- Pg. 6, doing something you wouldn't think would happen

Pact- Pg. 31, an agreement

Brimmed- Pg. 45, To be full of something

Remorseful- Pg. 50, Feeling bad or guilty

Nonchalant- Pg. 56, Calm

Eavesdropping- Pg. 69- Listening in while someone else is talking

Hereafter- Pg. 72, the life that some people believe happens after a person dies

Remnant-Pg. 86, a small part of something that is still there after the rest is gone

Unadorned- Pg. 87, not decorated or made to look nice

Immoral-Pg. 91, what someone thinks or feels is wrong

Chafed- Pg. 129, Sore because something has rubbed against the skin

Methodically- Pg. 130, Doing something in a very specific, orderly way

Gurney- Pg. 135, A stretcher on wheels used by hospitals and ambulances

Hordes- Pg. 148, a large group of people

Impudent- Pg. 160, rude

Bore- Pg. 172, to have dug deeply

Resentment- Pg. 190, having a bad feeling toward someone or something

Consenting, Pg. 199, giving permission or agreeing, allowing

### **Standards**

Language Arts: 3.1.4, 3.1.6, 3.2.4, 3.2.6, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.5.3, 4.2.3, 4.3.3, 4.3.6, 5.2.3, 5.3.2, 6.2.1, 6.3.2, 6.3.3, 6.3.5, 6.3.6

Science- 3.1.6

Social Studies- 3.1.6, 3.4.8, 5.3.3

### **Read-Aloud Passages**

Chapter 1/ Pages 5-6; This passage describes Josh's first encounter with Aunt Ethel and sets up what the rest of his summer may be like. It makes the reader think about what else could happen to Josh in the story.

Chapter 17/ Page 170; Josh is alone with the armed and masked intruder who is demanding the box Josh found in Willie's grave. Someone pulls into the driveway and Josh must use some quick thinking to help get him out of this situation. Readers will be drawn to the story from this passage due to its sense of adventure and the dangerous situation Josh is in.

### **If you Like *The Ghost's Grave*, You'll love...**

Other Books by Peg Kehret: *Small Steps*, *Abduction*, *The Stranger Next Door*, *The Hideout*, *Spy Cat*, *Nightmare Mountain*

Similar genre: *Haunting at Home Plate* by David Patneau, *Ghost Ship* by Dietlof Reiche, *Your Guide to Cemetery Research* by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, *Who Stole Halloween?* by Martha Freeman

### Across the Curriculum

- Social Studies/ Science- Have students do research using the internet, encyclopedias, books, and old newspaper articles about coal mining and coal mining towns. Students can look at what coal is used for, how the towns survived, and coal mining today. They can also look into the dangers of working at a coal mine.

Supplies: Computers, Encyclopedias, books, newspapers

Standards: Social Studies: 3.1.3, 3.1.6, 3.1.7, 5.4.5, 5.4.6,

Technology: 3B

- Art/ Language Arts- Write a thank you letter to Aunt Ethel for letting you (Josh) stay with her for the summer. Design a cover on the card that depicts your favorite memory from your stay with her.

Supplies: Paper, Pencil, Construction paper, crayons, markers, scissors, glue

Standards: LA: 3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.4.1, 3.4.3, 3.4.9, 3.4.6, 3.5.3, 3.5.5, 3.6.2, 3.6.3, 4.3.3., 4.4.2, 4.4.10, 4.5.6, 5.3.8, 5.4.8, 5.5.6, 6.3.3, 6.4.8,

### Resources

- Ask a former coal miner to come in to speak to the class about what his or her days were like in the coal mine. He or she can describe what it was like inside the mine, what the daily routine was like, as well as the dangers of working in the mine.

For help locating a working coal mine and its employees, contact Licia Weber (e-mail: [weber@indiana.edu](mailto:weber@indiana.edu)) at the Indiana Geological Survey, 611 N. Walnut Grove, Bloomington, IN 47405.

- <http://www.teachcoal.org/lessonplans/elementary.html> This website gives suggestions for many activities related to coal mining from how coal forms, how it is used and transported, to using cookies to simulate the costs associated with coal mining.

American Coal Foundation:Lesson Plans. 2007.

<<http://www.teachcoal.org/lessonplans/elementary.html>>

## **Activities**

- As a class come up with what the headline for the next day's newspaper could be after Josh helped catch Mr. Turlep. Individually write an article honoring Josh for his bravery.

3.3.3, 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 4.3.2, 4.4.1, 5.2.4, 5.4.1, 6.3.2

- Cookie Mining (See <http://www.teachcoal.org/lessonplans/elementary.html>) for directions and information.

3.2.2, 3.2.7, 4.2.3, 4.3.2, 5.2.4, 6.2.7

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<http://www.teachcoal.org/lessonplans/elementary.html>

[www.pegkehret.com](http://www.pegkehret.com)

<http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/standards>