



The World of Wondrous Willow



A Teaching Guide



Marveling at her wondrous existence, Willow courageously takes us on a journey of the heart exploring life, death, unlikely heroes, and a miracle when a man-made fire changes her mountain home forever.



Nominate an Everyday Hero
www.WondrousWillow.com

Connecting with Wondrous Willow

Language Arts Activity

DICTIONARIES VS. THESAURUS

Willow's world contains a lot of big words for new readers. Ask your readers to go back into the text to pick out words they don't understand. Teach students the difference between a dictionary and a thesaurus and how to access these important reading/writing resources. Have your child look up the meaning of each word, then using the thesaurus to substitute another word in its place. Ask students to share the words they discovered, and if they prefer the old word (now that they know the meaning), or as a writer, would she or he pick a different word.

Creative Writing Activity

RESEARCH & CREATE A NEW ANIMAL CHARACTER

Willow lives in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Explain to students that all good writers research the setting they choose for their stories. Have students pick a location around the world. Show them how to look up information about their chosen location—what kind of plants, insects and animals live there. Have your child create a new character based on his or her research. Draw the character, and then write three paragraphs describing the location, new character, and details about the new character's life. Would Willow be able to live there? This is how we create new worlds and begin to write a book. Allow students to proudly share what they've created with the class!

Friendship Activities



DIFFERENCES ARE WHAT MAKE US SPECIAL

In Nature, sometimes the most unlikely animals can become friends despite being very different in size, color, and shape, what they like to eat and do—or, they come from different parts of the world. In Willow's world, what animals might likely seem to be friends, and what animal friends seem a complete surprise? Ask students to draw an animal pairing from Willow's world, sharing why they chose that pair. As human beings, we also come in different sizes, colors, and shapes. How are people the same and how are they different? Does this mean we can't all be friends? Explain that diversity is an important

part of nature and is what makes each one of us unique. Ask each child to draw themselves, identifying something unique (inside or outside), explaining why it's good.

EVERYDAY HEROES AMONG US

Percy and Willow are recognized by the Wisdom Circle as heroes. What did they do to be called a hero? Initiate discussion with students on what makes someone a hero. Ask students to create a mini-play, acting out a heroic situation. Can a child be a hero just by being extra kind to a family member or a friend? Make a list of what every day heroes do. Have students use art supplies to make a wreath or paper badges to award to someone who performs a heroic act.



Nature Activities

EVERYTHING HAS A SPECIAL PURPOSE

Take your students outdoors, asking them to explore any nature they see before them. What do they spy and what is its special purpose? Explain that each child has a special purpose, and that sometimes we know what it is very young, or sometimes it happens by surprise, or we don't discover it until we are older adults.

HOW HUMANS TAKE CARE OF NATURE

Explain that humans have had a hard time finding the right balance between taking care of themselves and taking care of Nature. Are we separate from nature, or are we part of it? We see a man-made controlled (prescribed) burn from Willow and all the plants and animal's perspective in the story. Discuss or play act what Willow and her friends were feeling as the fire was burning. What is a controlled burn and why do we do them? Allow students to freely voice their opinion about controlled burns without making anyone right or wrong.

Developing Compassion for Others

The author of *Wondrous Willow* wrote the book for her young daughter, Victoria, who had cancer. Being sick or having a family member who is very sick can be difficult. Ask students to share if they've ever been really sick or had a family member or friend who was very sick. How did it make them feel? How did the family and others work together to help that person?