

Forever Birchwood

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Twelve-year-old Wolf and her three best friends live in Northern Ontario and share a deep love of nature. When Wolf's grandmother shares a story about her great-grandfather, Wolf understands that her fate is to protect the trees and the wilderness around her. She embarks on a dangerous mission to save the trees destined to be cut for a new housing development. Highlighting Wolf's strong connection to her Indigenous roots, this story takes readers on an adventure with well-developed characters and age-appropriate social struggles, presenting conflicts that intermediate-level students may find relatable and realistic.

Teachers may introduce this book as a class read-aloud, in small-group novel studies, or

for independent reading. Students may be prompted to connect to the tale and make inferences to develop a deeper understanding of the story and themes.

Collections Indigenous ARC-BC Novel

Subject English Language Arts

Grades 5-7

Primary Identifier 9781443463348

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Resource Evaluation

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum?

Extensively

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

This novel supports the Language Arts Big Ideas that “exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and the world” and “language and text can be a source of creativity and joy.” This novel can be connected to all six Core Competencies through class discussions.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

This resource could be used as a read-aloud, a small-group novel study, or as an independent novel. Teachers could use reading strategies such as connecting, visualizing, or inferencing to help develop a deeper understanding of the text.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ability:

There is a lack of representation of disability within the novel.

Ethical:

To preserve the land, the girls trespassed onto a construction site to remove orange tags from trees that were to be cut down in order to slow down construction. The group of girls meet up with some boys from school after dark. They play an uncomfortable game of Truth or Dare, which involves kissing, and the lack of consent in this situation may be beyond the readers' comprehension.

Safety:

The main character and her friends sneak out overnight and climb a mountainside in the dark. A character's brother is noted as having been killed by a drunk driver. The group of friends sneak onto a live demolition site to try to stop it as dynamite is set to explode.

Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning?

Extensively

Social Considerations Comments:

The novel does not include a wide range of people with abilities and disabilities. The main character and friends break the rules to preserve their cherished hangout spot (a mountainside and forest). Their safety is at risk during these ventures, which include trespassing, climbing a mountain, and being near a live demolition site. The characters are involved in a Truth or Dare game played off as a joke, but it is uncomfortable and blurs the line of consent.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content

Should this product be identified as Canadian?

Yes

Is the resource engaging?

Extensively

Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?

Extensively

Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?

Extensively

Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?

Extensively

Is the resource an Authentic First Peoples Text?

Yes

Audience:

Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?

Moderately

Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?

Extensively

Is the level of detail appropriate?

Extensively

Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?

Extensively

The story is generally appropriate for the intended readers; however, the lack of consent in the Truth or Dare game may be beyond the comprehension of some students. Although the students aren't forced to kiss one another, they are clearly uncomfortable with the dares presented. Due to social pressure, they submit to the dares. The repercussions do not deal with consent, and young readers may not understand the complicated nature of the social dynamics.

TECHNICAL DESIGN

Does the resource make effective use of the medium?

Extensively

Is the resource easy to use?

Extensively

Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?

Extensively

Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?

Extensively

The novel has 287 pages and is broken into forty-three chapters.

PRINT NOVEL

Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?

Extensively

Does the text broaden students' experiences and understanding?

Extensively

To what degree is this text stylistically rich?

Extensively

Plot description:

This story follows a twelve-year-old girl, Wolf, and her three best friends, who all live in a mining town in Northern Ontario. Wolf is proud of her Indigenous roots and shares a love of nature with her grandmother. Her grandmother shares a story with Wolf about how her great-grandfather was a tree-talker. Wolf knows she is fated to protect the wilderness around her, including the birch trees. When Wolf and her friends' favourite place (a clubhouse nestled in nature) is set to be clear-cut to make room for a new housing development, they must work together to save it. The friends struggle with their friendship as they are on the verge of their own journeys.

Related Comments:

The characters are well developed and encounter age-appropriate social struggles. The main characters face and persevere through conflicts in a relatable and realistic way. The main character, Wolf, experiences personal growth while connecting with various people in her life.

Genre:

Adventure

Literary Highlights:

- Complex conflict
- Rich Characterization
- Well-developed themes

Type:

Novel

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

- At intended grade level(s)

The book is a Silver Birch Fiction Award nominee.

Resource URL

<https://focusedresources.ca/en/k-12-evaluated-resource-collection/forever-birchwood>