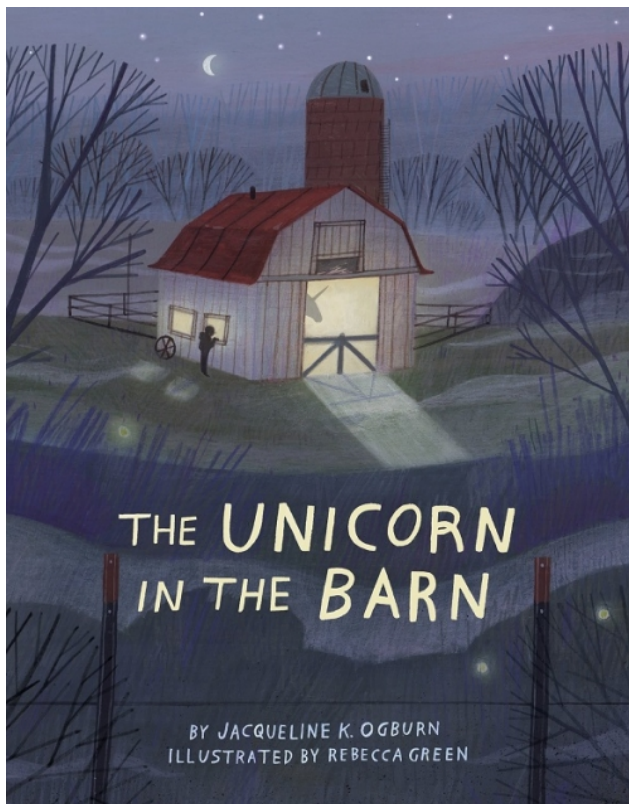


Unicorn in the Barn, The

Ogburn, J. K.



Eleven-year-old Eric has a special relationship with his grandma but when she falls ill she sells her house to a vet. Eric has heard about a special white deer but when he stumbles across it, it is actually a unicorn that the vet is caring for and she invites Eric secretly to help care for her menagerie of magical creatures. When Eric learns that the unicorn has magical powers he struggles with whether to use the unicorn's healing powers for personal reasons. This compelling novel, with fantastic creatures and rich characters, will allow students to connect with, and consider, sensitive topics of loss of a loved one, recreational hunting, and environmental issues.

Collections Novel

Subject English Language Arts

Grades 4-7

Primary Identifier 9781328595850

Evaluation Date May 2021

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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 book supports BC curricula in English Language Arts for Grades 4-7. The resource provides opportunities for students to engage with the Big Ideas in the Language Arts curriculum including "language and story can be a source of creativity and joy," "exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world," and "stories can be understood from different perspectives."

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

This resource is appropriate for students in Grades 4-7 and supports facets of the Core Competencies. The book could be used as part of a Language Arts unit that offers students opportunities to reflect upon sensitive issues such as hunting, environmental issues, and life challenges such as the loss of a family member.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Age:

The main character, Eric, has a close relationship with his grandmother who moves into a nursing home because of ailing health. With each visit, the grandmother's health diminishes, and she experiences a heart attack. Toward the end of the novel, the grandmother passes away. There is also a reference to Eric's mother passing away when he was two. The sensitive nature of the content could be upsetting to students who share similar experiences.

Belief System:

There is a Christian religious reference which may require explanation and discussion.

Ethical:

The unicorn has special healing powers, but using these powers leaves the unicorn weak and depleted. Eric struggles with the moral dilemma of using the unicorn's healing powers for personal reasons. Hunting season is open to hunters in the forest near the vet clinic. This may prompt questions and discussion about hunting for recreation.

Safety:

On several occasions during the novel, reference is made to Eric's father smoking. With the health repercussions associated with smoking, this may generate questions and discussion.

Language:

The words 'hell' and 'Christ' are used in the text and may be offensive to some readers.

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

Moderately

Social Considerations Comments:

The social considerations outlined for this resource support and enhance student learning. The social considerations relating to age, belief system, and ethical and legal offer students opportunities for deep-thinking questions, discussion, and debate. While the story may appeal to students younger than Grade 4, the use of strong language may be offensive to younger or more sensitive readers.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content

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

Audience:

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

Extensively

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?

Moderately

The text is a compelling novel that is appropriate for students in Grades 4–7. The text shares the wonder of magical creatures and encourages students to make connections and generate questions about relevant issues such as the loss of a loved one, the environment, and

recreational hunting. While the reading level can't be adjusted, the text may be read aloud to support struggling readers. The story may appeal to younger readers, but the use of strong language in the text is worth consideration for a younger audience.

TECHNICAL DESIGN

Does the resource make effective use of the medium?

Extensively

Is the location of illustrations appropriate?

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

This novel is easy to read with an appropriate-sized font and spacing. Young readers will enjoy the colourful landscape, characters, and details present on the cover of the text and the black and white illustrations interspersed throughout the novel.

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:

The novel is about a young boy, Eric, who comes upon an injured unicorn that he follows to his new neighbour's house, Dr. Brancusi. Through this discovery, Eric learns that Dr. Brancusi is a veterinarian who treats pets and magical creatures. Eric is invited to help with the care of the animals and becomes particularly attached to the unicorn. The parallel story features glimpses into Eric's earlier life and his relationship to his grandmother. The text takes us through Eric's journey of unraveling mysteries and working through life's joys and sorrows.

Related Comments:

This contemporary novel provides rich characters and an engaging plot to discuss the experience of the young protagonist. The various settings described in the novel use descriptive language that enables readers to make vibrant visualizations. The cover illustrations reflect the setting, characters, and mood depicted in the novel.

Genre:

Contemporary

Literary Highlights:

- Complex conflict
- Point of view

Type:

Novel

Visual Highlights:

Novel

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

- At intended grade level(s)

This text is a debut novel by Jacqueline K. Ogburn. Information about the author and her other publications can be found at: <https://www.wincbooks.com/jogburn.htm>

Resource URL

<https://focusedresources.ca/en/k-12-evaluated-resource-collection/unicorn-barn>