

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Kneeknock Rise

by

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Book Information

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Book Level: 4.4

Interest Level: MG

Egan hopes to become a hero by slaying the Megrimum, a mysterious creature that lives on Kneeknock Rise near his relatives' home. When he learns the truth about the creature, he has to decide if he should share his discovery with the villagers.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books; Newbery Honor

Topics: Mysteries, Detective Stories

Main Characters

Ada Egan's cousin who lives in Instep; she is inconsiderate and rude but proud that she lives close to the Rise

Annabelle Uncle Ott's friendly, old dog; she is left behind when Uncle Ott climbs the Rise

Aunt Gertrude Egan's aunt; she is the nervous type but is kind to Egan

Egan the main character of the story; he climbs Kneeknock Rise and discovers the truth about the Megrimum

Sweetheart Ada's cat; he scratches Egan and destroys Uncle Anson's new clock

the chandler the man who takes Egan to Instep in his cart; he is going to Instep to sell candles at the Fair

the Megrimum the famed creature that lives on top of the Rise; visitors flock to Instep to hear it moan and whine

Uncle Anson Egan's uncle; he builds clocks and sells them in his shop in Instep

Uncle Ott Egan's uncle and Uncle Anson's brother; he likes writing verses and reading; he climbs the Rise to discover the truth

caravans large, covered wagons that can be used as homes

chandler a person who makes or sells candles

contentedly with a satisfied, happy manner

feverish sick and too warm in the body

fussy demanding and concerned with details

jolted moved with sudden, jerking motion

misty covered or surrounded by fog or haze

prodded shoved or pushed to encourage action of movement

resentful filled with a sense of anger and injustice

slay kill in a violent manner

Synopsis

Egan, a young boy, travels to the village of Instep for the first time to visit relatives and to attend the famed Instep Fair. Instep is famous for being the village closest to the Rise, the home of a mysterious creature known as the Megrimum. Whenever a hard rain falls, the Megrimum whines and moans. This attraction draws many visitors to Instep.

When Egan arrives at Uncle Anson's house, he has an unpleasant encounter with his young cousin, Ada. She is rude to him, and her cat, Sweetheart, scratches him. Aunt Gertrude is nervous but kind to him and shows him to Uncle Ott's room, where Egan will be staying. Uncle Ott, who likes writing verses and reading, has disappeared, as he has often done before. This time, however, he has not taken his faithful dog, Annabelle, with him. For this reason, his family is concerned about him. Uncle Anson arrives home from work at suppertime, bringing with him a beautiful clock he has made. Unfortunately, when the clock strikes, Sweetheart attacks the bird that comes out of the clock and destroys it. She receives no punishment because the Megrimum, who supposedly likes cats, would not approve.

Later that night when everyone is in bed, a storm moves in, and Egan hears the Megrimum for the first time. He discovers that Annabelle is afraid of storms. Ada tells him about the things her mother and father do to keep the Megrimum away from their house. During the storm, the family is frightened by

Vocabulary

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a tapping on the window. The next day, the villagers speculate about the mysterious visitor (which is later revealed to be Uncle Ott) and offer various charms to protect the family. That night, Egan reads several of Uncle Ott's verses and thinks he is a very wise man.

Finally, the first day of the Fair arrives. Ada and Egan, accompanied by Annabelle, go to the Fair and enjoy all the sights and sounds. Egan purchases gifts for everyone. Villagers and visitors alike are hoping for rain to move in so the Megrimum will become active. At the end of the day, with a storm brewing, Ada taunts Egan and dares him to climb the Rise to prove he's not afraid. Egan, along with Annabelle, takes the challenge and starts climbing, much to Ada's chagrin. On top of the Rise, Egan finds Uncle Ott. Uncle Ott explains that the sound coming from up there is nothing but a hot spring. Steam is released from a hole in the ground when it rains, making a whistling noise. He shows Egan the cave where the spring is located. Egan wants to immediately go back to the village to tell the people the truth. He thinks it will make them glad, and he will become a hero. Uncle Ott has a different opinion. He thinks the people enjoy believing in the Megrimum and would not like to know the truth. He decides to go down the other side of the Rise rather than return to the village with Egan. Before Egan returns to Instep, he throws a rock into the cave to plug the hole and prevent the steam from escaping. In his own way, he has "slain" the Megrimum.

Egan returns to the village and tries to tell the villagers what he discovered on the Rise, but no one will let him tell his story. He finally relates the story to Uncle Anson, Aunt Gertrude, and Ada. Aunt Gertrude and Ada are skeptical and refuse to believe him. Uncle Anson tries to remain neutral. When rain starts to fall, Ada waits with trepidation for the whining to begin. When it doesn't, she is very upset. After an explosion on the Rise, however, the moaning starts, and Ada is happy again. Her belief in the Megrimum seems to be validated.

The next day, it is time for Egan to return home. He tries to question Uncle Anson about the Megrimum,

but Uncle Anson dodges his questions. The only thing Egan is sure of is that he did not see the Megrimum on top of the Rise. Uncle Anson tells him that the facts don't really matter. What really matters is whether you want to believe or not. Egan heads home with the understanding that he will probably return the following year.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

When Egan was at the top of the Rise, he said, "I did slay the Megrimum, in a way. Or at least I'll slay it now." What did he mean by each part of his statement?

When he revealed the truth about the cave and what was really making the noise, he thought belief in the Megrimum would no longer exist. After he said he would slay it now, he took a rock and blocked the hole in the ground to stop the moaning noise, in effect, slaying the Megrimum.

Literary Analysis

A folk tale is a story that is passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. It is often based on superstition and becomes part of the tradition in a community. How is *Kneeknock Rise* like a folk tale?

People who visited Instep shared their tales with people in their own villages. Stories about the Megrimum were very old and had been told for as long as people could remember. The townspeople developed many superstitions and traditions surrounding the Megrimum.

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Inferential Comprehension

After speaking with Uncle Ott on top of the Rise, Egan decided that Uncle Ott was pretty foolish after all. After returning to Instep and trying to share his discovery, however, he told Uncle Anson that Uncle Ott was a very wise man who understood everything. What made Egan change his mind about Uncle Ott?

On the Rise, Egan thought the people really didn't know about the cave and would be glad to find out the truth about the Megrimum. Uncle Ott had a different opinion. When Egan climbed back down to Instep, he discovered that Uncle Ott had been right. The townspeople did not want to hear the truth. They wanted to keep believing in the Megrimum.

Constructing Meaning

Both Uncle Ott and Egan knew the truth about the Megrimum. Uncle Ott did not want to tell anyone, but Egan did. If you had the same choice, what would you do? Why?

Answers will vary but should include the reasons behind the student's choice.

Teachable Skills

Responding to Literature Although the book does not give a physical description of the Megrimum, encourage the students to imagine what it looked like. Have each student write a paragraph describing what the Megrimum might have looked like and then draw a picture to go with the paragraph.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors

Throughout the story are many examples of superstitious behavior. As a class, list as many of these superstitions from the book as possible. Discuss other superstitions the students may be familiar with. Perhaps some students could do research on the origins of certain superstitions.

Making Predictions At the end of the story, Egan was returning home. Have the students write a few paragraphs describing his homecoming. They should be sure to include what he tells his

parents and others about the Megrimum.

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning Discuss figurative language such as similes, metaphors, and personification. There are many examples throughout the book. Have students be on the lookout for these as they read. They can write the examples of figurative language in a notebook. As a class, discuss the examples the students found as they read. Create a chart and place each example under the proper heading: simile, metaphor, or personification. Encourage them to use figurative language in their own writing.