

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Who's There?

by
Stephanie S. Tolan

Book Information

Stephanie S. Tolan, Who's There?

Quiz Number: 11749

William Morrow & Company Inc, 1994

ISBN 0-688-04611-8; LCCN

235 Pages

Book Level: 4.9

Interest Level: UG

When fourteen-year-old Drew and her mute younger brother come to live with their father's estranged relatives after their parents' sudden death, they discover that the house is haunted by ghosts and a deadly family secret.

Topics: Disabilities, Speech Impaired/Mute; Emotions, Sadness; Family Life, Brothers; Family Life, Death; Family Life, Sisters; Mysteries, Hauntings/Ghosts

Main Characters

Amalie Broderick Aunt Jocelyn's stepmother, who died a mysterious death in 1961; she had a reputation for kindness, but actually was responsible for drowning her stepson, the first Evan; Amalie makes her appearance in the story as an evil ghost

Douglas Broderick the deceased father of Drew and Evan, who many years ago was banished by his father when he suggested that Amalie was an evil woman

Drew Carolyn Broderick the grieving daughter of Douglas Broderick; she reveals the truth about Amalie in order to stay at Rose Hill, where she feels she and her brother Evan belong

Evan Broderick the traumatized son of Douglas Broderick, who has not spoken since both his parents died in a gas explosion; he makes friends with the ghost of the first Evan

Evan Broderick (the first Evan) Jocelyn's beloved younger brother, who was murdered by Amalie; his ghost protects Evan from Amalie's ghost

Gilbert Broderick (Grandfather) the bitter grandfather of Drew and Evan, who has never recovered from the deaths of Amalie and the first Evan; his grief and illness keep him bedridden

Jocelyn Broderick the kind but pragmatic aunt of Drew and Evan, who takes them in when she finds out their parents died; out of a sense of guilt she has given up all aspirations in life in order to help her father cope with the loss of Amalie and the first Evan

Mrs. Connelly the chatty librarian who helps Drew and Will with their research

Professor and Mrs. Tilden the friends of Douglas Broderick who, after the gas explosion, took Drew and Evan in until they could find someone else to take responsibility for the children

Will Hardin Drew's young friend, who helps her fight the ghost of Amalie; he works as a gardener for the Brodericks

Vocabulary

audible loud enough to be heard

conceal to hide

infinite unlimited or without end

materialize to form

obliterate to completely destroy

subside to go away

Synopsis

When Drew and Evan Broderick lose their parents in a gas explosion, they have to live with their parents' best friends, the Tildens. This is an uncomfortable arrangement for everyone, and when the Tildens locate the children's Aunt Jocelyn and Grandfather Broderick, they quickly take the children to Rose Hill, the Broderick family estate. After they are settled, Drew explores the estate, including the old attic. While going through boxes in the attic that have old documents in them, she opens a box with a circled "A," and an overwhelmingly sweet odor makes her nauseous. Inside, she finds a number of old letters.

A few days later a young boy named Will shows Drew the Rose Hill grounds. During the tour, Will mentions a ghost he has seen in a window of the house. When Drew investigates the room with that window, she finds that the doorknob of the room is freezing cold. Aunt Jocelyn laughs when Drew asks about ghosts and tells her it is just a writing room.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Who's There?

by

Stephanie S. Tolan

Convinced there is a ghost, Drew starts looking through the attic for clues to the ghost's identity and makes arrangements with Will to go to the public library to find more information about the history of the families who have lived in the house.

At the library Drew notices that one of the library wings is called the Amalie and Evan Broderick Wing. Aunt Jocelyn will only tell her that Amalie was Jocelyn's stepmother and that both Amalie and Jocelyn's younger brother, who was also called Evan, drowned in the pond. Curious, Drew speaks to a gossipy librarian who tells her that Amalie was a beloved woman who found her six-year-old stepson Evan drowning in the pond and drowned trying to save him.

While looking at a poetry book written by Amalie, Drew and Will see Amalie's picture and realize the ghost is Amalie. Confused as to why Amalie is haunting Rose Hill, Drew and Will return to the house and look in the writing room. When Amalie starts to materialize, Drew panics and leaves dragging Will with her. Will insists the cold is an attribute of all ghosts, but Drew thinks she felt evil in Amalie.

When Drew tells Aunt Jocelyn about the incident, she is told to stop talking about ghosts. That night, Amalie comes to Drew's room. Terrified, Drew flees but returns after the ghost has gone. Drew now feels compelled to find out what is troubling Amalie.

The next morning Drew goes to the attic and finds a box of letters that show that Amalie was a selfish woman who hated children. The last letter talks specifically about Amalie's journal. The letter writer urges Amalie to burn the journal before it exposes Amalie's evil plans.

That night Amalie comes after Drew again but disappears when Evan and his cat come out of his room. Drew spends the rest of the night in Evan's room, which seems to be the only safe place in the house.

When Drew shows her aunt the letters, Aunt Jocelyn

becomes extremely agitated. She tells Drew she is wrong about Amalie. She then tells Drew that Drew and Evan may not work out as part of the Rose Hill family because Drew has brought the suspicions of her father Douglas with her. He was cast out from the family for trying to convince everyone that Amalie was not the kind, gentle woman she pretended to be.

Desperate to prove the truth about Amalie to Aunt Jocelyn, Drew and Will try to search the writing room for the journal. Aunt Jocelyn discovers them and tells Will he is no longer allowed in the house.

That night Amalie comes again to Drew's room, but this time she chases Drew out of the house and down to the pond in an attempt to drown her. Drew comes dangerously close to drowning, but Evan yells a warning to Drew to prevent her from going any farther into the pond. Drew is stunned, as this is the first time Evan has spoken since the death of their parents.

Back in Evan's room, Evan tells Drew that the ghost of the first Evan told him to stop Amalie from hurting Drew. Evan tells Drew that Amalie drowned the first Evan and then drowned as well, unable to get out of the pond. She haunts the writing room to protect her journal.

The following day Drew and Will form a plan to get Amalie's journal. Evan draws Amalie away from her room. While Drew is retrieving the journal from its hiding place, she hears screaming. Drew races down to the pond to intercept Amalie, who is trying to drown Evan and Will. When Drew shows Amalie that she already has the journal, Amalie vanishes. Drew gives the journal to Aunt Jocelyn to read. After Aunt Jocelyn reads the journal, she decides not to tell her father the truth about Amalie because it would only hurt him. The ghost of the first Evan says good-bye; he can go to heaven now that Jocelyn knows the truth. Drew, Jocelyn, and Evan become a true family.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Who's There?

by
Stephanie S. Tolan

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Why does the first Evan haunt Rose Hill?

He realizes that Amalie's ghost is in the house and that she still poses a threat to his family. He cannot go to heaven until he finds a way to tell his story to the family and expose Amalie for the evil stepmother she was and the evil, threatening ghost she is. When the family is safe from Amalie, he can leave. Evan also needs to have a chance to say good-bye to the ones who loved him so dearly.

Literary Analysis

When Will and Drew begin reading from Amalie's poetry book at the library, they realize that, despite her reputation, her poetry is not very good. How is this a reflection of her character?

Amalie is a person of pretense, whose private and public personalities are quite different. Just as she appears to be kind but is really evil, she is thought to be a talented poet but is really a very poor one.

Inferential Comprehension

Why is Aunt Jocelyn so reluctant to hear the truth about Amalie?

When the first Evan and Amalie died, Jocelyn felt responsible for their deaths. She has spent most of her life trying to make amends for not properly watching Evan on the night he and Amalie died. If Amalie is evil, then Jocelyn would have to admit to herself that she and her father have wasted thirty years of their life mourning Amalie. Jocelyn also does not want to believe that the precious memories of times spent with Amalie are all lies and that Amalie never cared for anyone in the Broderick family.

Constructing Meaning

Throughout this story there are opinions about Amalie that masquerade as fact. How do the opinions about Amalie complicate the events in this story?

Most of the characters do not want to believe that Amalie was evil. When Drew insists that she can feel the evil, Will tells her that he does not think someone so good in life could be a bad ghost. This initially causes Drew to misunderstand Amalie's motives for haunting Rose Hill. Aunt Jocelyn refuses even to hear bad things about Amalie and is enraged by Drew's attempts to find out the truth. Instead of helping Drew solve the mystery, she makes Drew's investigation even more difficult by banning Will from the house and forcing Drew to sneak around at night to confront Amalie.

Teachable Skills

Comparing and Contrasting Amalie and the first Evan are two very different types of ghosts, but they do share some similarities. Have the students make a list of their similarities and their differences.

Recognizing Setting Rose Hill has seen a lot of history and people, and this is part of what makes it difficult for Drew to figure out who is haunting the house. Have the students draw a picture of Rose Hill and the grounds around it using descriptions from the book as their guide.

Recognizing Feelings Amalie obviously had some very strong feelings about the Broderick family that she recorded in her journal. Many of the other characters are also struggling with powerful emotions. Have the students write a few pages of a journal by either Amalie or one of the other characters about the events in this book.

Responding to Literature Drew does some research to find out more about her family's history. Assign students to choose a single ancestor or a branch of their family to research. Have them consult family records and interview older relatives for information. Have them summarize their information in a report.