



THE SHADOW COLLECTOR'S APPRENTICE

AMY GORDON

GRADES
4-7

About the Book

Peculiar things are going on in the town of Medley during the summer of 1963. The antique shop's owner has the disturbing hobby of collecting people's shadows, but is it as harmless as he claims? An intriguing mystery lies at the heart of this warm, eccentric, and enchanting middle-grade novel.

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Literature/Language Arts

Questions for discussion/writing—Students may discuss the following questions as a whole class or in pairs or small groups, or choose one or more about which to write.

- ❖ The book begins with a diary page. What did you think of the opening sentence? How did it pull you into the story? How do you think the use of various diary pages throughout the story was helpful to the plot? How does keeping a journal or diary help one to consolidate one's thoughts?
- ❖ The story combines fantasy and realism. How do you feel about the author's use of this technique? Do you like it? Why or why not? Discuss why you might prefer a novel to be either fantastic or realistic.
- ❖ As each of the older characters' shadows is collected by Batty, the characters seem to change and lose some of their enthusiasm for life. Why do you think this happens? Were you satisfied with the explanation that comes toward the end of the story?
- ❖ The book has two main story lines: the idea of collecting shadows and the quest to make biofuel using apple cider. What was your reaction to the use of these two story elements? What points do you think the author was trying to make? Do you think it

makes sense to include both themes in the same story? Why or why not?

- ❖ Different friendships arise during the story: between Cully and Sam; between Cully and Isabel; between the other girls and Isabel and Cully; and among various adults. How do people become friends? How can friendships change? Describe any similar experiences with changing friendships in your own life.
- ❖ When Cully finds his dad's diary near the end of the book, he learns that his dad's buddy told his dad that "on account of the Cold War, shadow-collecting is on the rise. In some cases the government is even turning a blind eye to illegal activities." (p. 150) How do you feel about the government's ignoring illegal activities if they enable the CIA, etc., to gain information about various enemies, as they did during the Cold War?

Poetry—Memorizing poetry plays a big part in the story, and several well-known poems are mentioned. Students may want to find them and read them aloud for the class, or even memorize the shorter ones. The following are poems to find: "Birches" by Robert Frost, "My Shadow" by Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service, "God's World" by Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Casey at the Bat" by Ernest Lawrence Thayer, "The Wreck of the

Hesperus” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and the lyrics of the song performed by Elvis Presley, “I Can’t Help Falling in Love With You.” (See “Electronic Resources” below for links.)

History

Several references are made to the Cold War, which was still in effect when the story takes place, in 1963. Students may be interested in learning more about this period. (See “Online Resources” below for links to information.)

Science/Art

Apples and Moths—Many varieties of apples are mentioned in the story: Baldwins, Honeycrisps, Spencers, Early Macs, Paula Reds, Northern Spies, Golden Delicious, Macouns, and Cortlands. Also, Aunt Inca talks about many different kinds of moths that she studied: Polyphemus, Sleepy Underwing, Lace Border, Brindled Sphinx, Coddling Moth, Cecropia, and Luna. Students may want to search for all of these apples and moths on

Google Images, and may wish to create their own drawings. They may also do further research in encyclopedias, in science books, and online.

Shadow Puppets—Students can make shadow puppets of characters from well-known children’s books or fairy tales and present them to younger children. (See “Online Resources” below.)

Research

Students may wish to do research on insect metamorphosis and create charts showing the various stages. They can use Google Images for photos.

Cooking

Apple rhubarb pie was Cully and his aunts’ favorite. Students may want to try making it at home to share with their families. Use a favorite recipe or find one online.

Online Resources

The Cold War—Two websites, one American and one British, present a wealth of links and information related to the various issues of the Cold War.

www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/index.php?action=lessons (American) and www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/cold/websites.html (British)

Poetry—www.poetryfoundation.org Search by poem title or poet to find poems from the book. Includes information about each poem and poet.

Apples and Moths—Students can search on www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi for colorful photographs of the many varieties of each that are mentioned in the book.

Shadow Puppets—http://cdn.makezine.com/make/wp_shadowpuppets.pdf Presents simple directions, created by an art teacher, for making shadow puppets.

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