

HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Grades
4-7



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Eleanor, Alice, and the Roosevelt Ghosts

by Dianne K. Salerni

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

ABOUT THE BOOK

Murderous ghosts and buried family secrets threaten young Eleanor and Alice Roosevelt in this thrilling middle-grade novel that puts a supernatural spin on alternate history.

It's 1898 in New York City, and ghosts exist among humans. When an unusual spirit takes up residence at the Roosevelt house, thirteen-year-old Eleanor and her fourteen-year-old cousin Alice are suspicious. His mischievous behavior grows stranger and more menacing. It's almost like he wants to scare the Roosevelts out of their home.

Meanwhile, Eleanor and Alice discover a dangerous ghost in the house where Theodore Roosevelt's daughter Alice was born and her mother died. Is someone else haunting the family?

Introverted Eleanor and unruly Alice develop an unlikely friendship as they explore the family's dark, complicated history. It's up to them to destroy both ghosts and come to terms with their family's losses.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- Eleanor and Alice Roosevelt are cousins, but they have very different personalities. Describe each girl. Why is Alice sent to live with Aunt Bye in New York? Why is Uncle Will worried about this arrangement? Explain why Grandmother Hall warns Eleanor to keep her distance from Alice. Why does Aunt Bye think that Eleanor might have a calming influence on Alice?
- Everything Alice knows about her dead mother has been told to her by Aunt Bye. Why does Alice's father never speak of his first wife? At what point does Alice learn that Aunt Bye hasn't told her the whole truth? Alice tells Aunt Bye, "This wasn't your secret to tell. It was his" (p. 172). To whom is she referencing? Alice's half brother, Teddy, runs away from Washington, D.C. and appears at Aunt Bye's house. What is his responsibility in uncovering and disturbing the ghost at Alice's birthplace? Explain how the ghost contributes to an improved relationship between Alice and her father.
- Discuss the different types of ghosts. Who is the ghost at Grandmother Hall's house? Explain why he doesn't present a threat or danger to Eleanor and her grandmother. Why is Alice's birthplace declared "Unsafe for Habitation"? Discuss what Eleanor and Alice witness when they go to the house. What does the strange neighbor know? How does Eleanor learn about the ghost at Aunt Bye's house? Discuss the behaviors of that ghost.



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- What is a *progenitor*? Mrs. Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman, famously known as Nellie Bly, represents the New York City Supernatural Registry and calls on Aunt Bye regarding the ghost in her house. Explain why she thinks it important to identify the progenitor? How might information about the history of the house be an important clue in identifying the progenitor? Why does Alice feel the ghost at Aunt Bye's house is a boy? Discuss the role of the séance in identifying the progenitor.
- Alice assigns Eleanor the task of going to the library and researching previous owners of Aunt Bye's house. How is Eleanor the perfect choice for this task? Alice goes into Aunt Bye's attic to search for clues. What does she learn about her own history as she conducts the search?
- Eleanor really wants to continue her education. How is this a source of conflict between Eleanor and Grandmother Hall? Explain how Eleanor manipulates her grandmother into allowing her to attend school in New York. Explain what Aunt Bye means when she says, "Your grandmother is a lonely woman, but that doesn't give her the right to steal your future" (p. 214). How does Eleanor get the education she desires? Discuss how the inheritance gives Eleanor the courage to confront Grandmother Hall.
- Explain the following metaphor and simile: "Like a shattered teacup, once a trust is broken, it might be glued together, but it will probably never again hold tea" (p. 140). What trusts are broken in the novel? Who is the teacup? How is it glued back together? Debate whether the teacup will hold tea again.
- Eleanor feels awkward around her cousins. Explain what Alice means when she says, "They can't make you feel awkward unless you let them" (p. 91). Eleanor is in the kitchen at Aunt Bye's house when she hears her cousins' friends speak mean words about her appearance and awkwardness. She is upset that Helen and Corrine don't stand up for her and laugh at the comments. When does Eleanor realize that this conversation never happened between the girls, but that it was the ghost who spoke those words?
- What is Franklin's role in fighting off the ghosts at Aunt Bye's house and at Alice's birthplace? At what point is it obvious that Franklin is interested in Eleanor? What attracts him to her? How does he contribute to her gaining a more positive sense of self?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo Credit: Bob Salerni

DIANNE K. SALERNI, author of *Eleanor, Alice, and the Roosevelt Ghosts*, has written many books for children and young adults, including the state-award nominated series *The Eighth Day* and the Junior Library Guild Selection *The Caged Graves*. She attended the University of Delaware and the University of Pennsylvania before teaching fourth and fifth grades for many years. Now Dianne spends her time hanging around creepy cemeteries, climbing two-thousand-year-old pyramids for book research, and volunteering at her local animal shelter. She lives in Pennsylvania with her family. Visit her at diannesalerni.com.

