

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

thematic connections

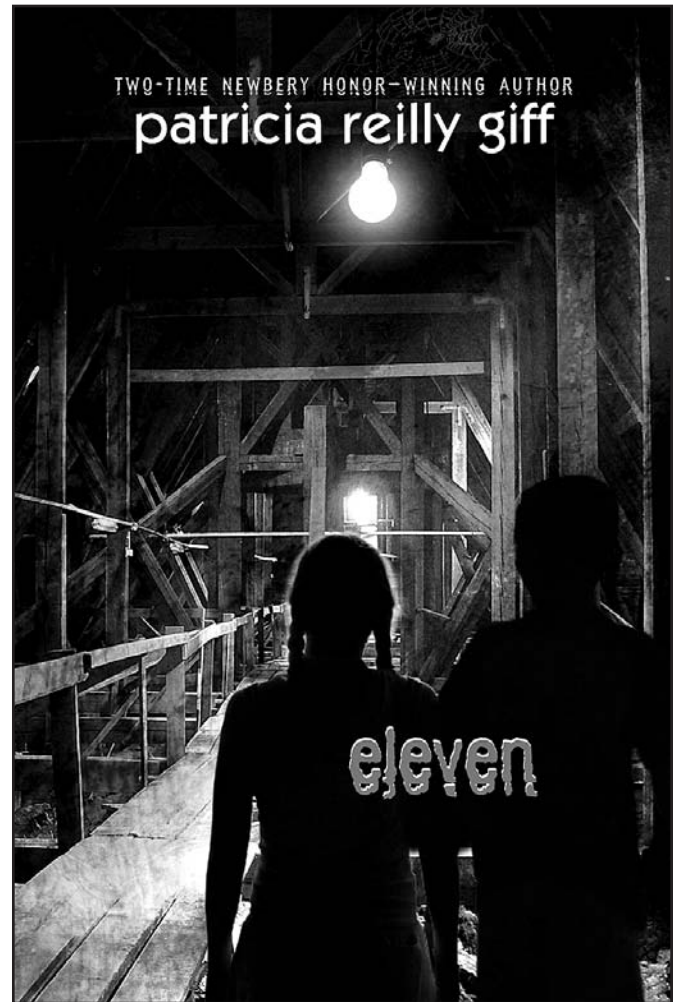
**Family • Belonging
Anger • Friendship
Achievement**

Grades 3–8

about the book

While searching for his birthday gift, 11-year-old Sam MacKenzie discovers a newspaper clipping that causes him to question who he is and where he belongs.

Eleven-year-old Sam MacKenzie finds a mysterious newspaper clipping in his grandfather's attic that appears to be about him. The problem is that Sam cannot read. He recognizes his name, and manages to decode the word "missing." Is the clipping connected to his strange dreams about the number 11, a castle, and a boat? How does Mack, his grandfather, fit into the puzzle? What do Onji and Anima, his extended family, know about him? Why is everyone so secretive? Sam's curiosity about his identity leads him to an unlikely friendship with Caroline, a new girl in his class. He is talented with wood, and Caroline can read and write. Together they build a wooden castle for a school assignment, and in the process begin a journey that reveals who Sam is and where he belongs. And, Caroline, whose family moves around a lot, gains a friend—something she never expects to happen.



Wendy Lamb Books HC: 978-0-385-73069-3 (0-385-73069-1)
GLB: 978-0-385-90098-0 (0-385-90098-8)
Listening Library CD: 978-0-7393-6280-8 (0-7393-6280-1)

**Share this mystery by two-time
Newbery Honor-winning author
Patricia Reilly Giff.**

Visit Teachers @ Random at www.randomhouse.com/teachers

WENDY
LAMB
BOOKS


RANDOM HOUSE
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

pre-reading activity

Invite a special education teacher or a representative from the local literacy association to speak to the class about reading disabilities. Ask them to discuss the methods used to help those who have reading difficulties.

thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Family—How are Sam, Mack, Onji, and Anima a family? Compare Sam's family to Caroline's family. Which family appears more unified? Debate whether Caroline envies Sam's relationship with his family. Describe the special bond between Sam and Mack. Explain how learning about his past makes Sam feel even closer to Mack.

Belonging—After Sam sees the newspaper clipping in the attic, he begins to question whether he belongs to Mack. Chart the scenes in the novel that reinforce Sam's doubts regarding his identity. Discuss why Sam doesn't want to ask Mack about the clipping. How does Caroline suffer from the need to belong? Explain how she deals with being an outsider.

Anger—Discuss Mack's reaction when Sam is sent to the principal for carving a "C" in the window sill. How does Mack suggest that Sam deal with his anger? Explain how Mack allowed anger to envelop his life in the past. Discuss how finding Sam helped Mack overcome his anger.

Friendship—Describe Sam and Caroline's friendship. Why does Sam feel that he must choose a girl to help him read the newspaper article in the attic? What is it about Caroline that makes Sam choose her? How does Caroline need Sam's friendship as much as Sam needs her's? At what point in the novel does Sam begin to value Caroline's friendship?

Achievement—Sam cannot read and Caroline cannot stop reading. Discuss why their teacher makes them partners on the medieval project. How does the castle that Sam and Caroline build prove to the class that Sam has a talent worthy of recognition? What is Mack's role in helping Sam achieve? Caroline's mother uses Sam as a model for the "bold knight" that she creates for the castle. Why is it fitting for Sam to be the "bold knight"? How does Mrs. Waring, Sam's resource teacher, give him hope that he will conquer his reading disability?

connecting to the curriculum

Language Arts—Sam discovers a newspaper clipping and can read enough of it to know that the article is about him. Have students write the article that Sam discovers.

Anima encourages Sam to learn to read by reading aloud to him. Ask students to consider Sam's interest, and make a list of 10 books for Anima to read to him.

Social Studies—Sam's class is studying medieval times. Because Sam is talented with wood, and cannot read, his teacher asks him to build a castle. Ask students to read about medieval life and list topics that Sam's classmates may have researched. Make a bibliography of books in the school library media center that the students in Sam's class may use to complete their assignment.

Math—Challenge students to construct a blueprint of Sam and Caroline's castle. They should include the dimensions of each room and the total square footage of the project. Consider the size of the castle and determine the appropriate scale of the clay figures that Caroline's mother makes.

Art—Architects do renderings of buildings that they design. These pictures are often framed once the project is complete. Have students draw a picture of Sam and Caroline's medieval castle that Sam may give to Caroline as a going-away gift.

Careers—Ask students to consider Sam's talent in art and construction, and brainstorm possible careers for him to explore. Such careers may include artist, builder, cabinetmaker, and furniture designer. Pick a career from the class list, and find out the training Sam needs to qualify for this career. What schools in your state might offer such training?

vocabulary/ use of language

The vocabulary in the novel isn't difficult. Encourage students to jot down unfamiliar words and define them by taking clues from the context. Such words may include: *turrets* (p. 18), *moat* (p. 18), *rummaged* (p. 18), *channel* (p. 33), *detention* (p. 43), *ornate* (p. 51), *irritable* (p. 58), *prow* (p. 62), *dredge* (p. 62), *leaden* (p. 81), and *trenchers* (p. 159).

related titles

by theme

Bud, Not Buddy

Christopher Paul Curtis

Family • Belonging

Grades 4–7

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41328-8 (0-440-41328-1)

Delacorte Press HC: 978-0-385-32306-2
(0-385-32306-9)

Pictures of Hollis Woods

Patricia Reilly Giff

Family • Belonging • Friendship

Grades 4–7

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41578-7 (0-440-41578-0)

Wendy Lamb Books HC: 978-0-385-32655-1
(0-385-32655-6)

Journey

Patricia MacLachlan

Family • Friendship • Belonging

Grades 4–7

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-40809-3 (0-440-40809-1)

Belle Prater's Boy

Ruth White

Family • Friendship

Grades 3–7

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41372-1 (0-440-41372-9)

 Listening Library Audio Available

on the web

For bios, teachers guides, and more . . .

Visit our FREE online site
Teachers @ Random

Be sure to sign up for our online newsletter!
www.randomhouse.com/teachers



Search over 140 themes and holidays
for books for your classroom!



Photo Credit: © 2003 Tim Keating

about the author

Patricia Reilly Giff is the author of many beloved books for children, including the Kids of the Polk Street School books, the Friends and Amigos books, and the Polka Dot Private Eye books. Several of her novels for older readers have been chosen as ALA Notable Books and ALA Best Books for Young Adults. *Lily's Crossing* and *Pictures of Hollis Woods* received Newbery Honors, and *Lily's Crossing* was a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Honor Book. Patricia Reilly Giff makes her home in Connecticut.

For more information about the author, visit
www.patriciareillygiff.com

internet resources

LD Online

www.ldonline.org/kids

This site provides information about various types of learning disabilities.

BLS Career Information

www.bls.gov/k12/

This site allows students to explore possible careers based on their interests.