

CAROL ANNE SHAW



Study Guide

Hannah & the Spindle Whorl

HANNAH & THE SPINDLE WHORL

SYNOPSIS

When twelve-year-old Hannah uncovers an ancient Salish spindle whorl hidden in a cave near her home in Cowichan Bay, she is transported back to a village called Tl'ulpalus, in a time before Europeans had settled in the area. Through the agency of a trickster raven, Hannah befriends Yisella, a young Coast Salish girl, and is welcomed into village life. Here she discovers that the spindle whorl is the prize possession of Yisella's mother, Skeepa, a famous spinner and weaver. When Skeepa falls victim to smallpox, Hannah finally begins to open up about the death of her own mother.

When Hannah and Yisella are accidentally left behind after the villagers journey to the mainland, they witness the arrival of Governor James Douglas and numerous settlers on the Hecate. As the settlers search the village for souvenirs, Hannah and Yisella rescue the spindle whorl and, pursued by the ship's crew, escape into the dark forest. From the refuge in the cave, Hannah returns to her own time, but with a greater understanding of herself, and the history of the First Nations people who call Cowichan Bay their home.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. What do you think it would be like to live by (or even on) the ocean? How would your life be different? If you already live by the ocean, talk about how your life would change if you had to move.
2. An estuary is where one or more rivers flow into the ocean, combining fresh water with salt. In what ways do you think living in an estuary would be important to traditional First Nations peoples? Think of how they may use the resources an estuary provides.
3. How would you react if you were transported back in time? Is there a particular time period you would like to visit? Explain your answer.

During Reading

Prologue and Chapters 1-3

1. In the prologue, what is Yisella's basket filled with? As you read *Hannah and the Spindle Whorl*, keep a list of all the natural resources Yisella and her people utilize on a daily basis.

2. How is Hannah's life different from your own? Do you share some things in common? If you could choose an aspect of Hannah's life to experience for yourself, what would it be and why?
3. Hannah talks about her favourite teachers. What do you think makes a good teacher? Explain your answer and give an example.
4. Max is the new kid in town. Have you ever been the new kid? Explain what it might be like to be new, giving some examples of the positive aspects and the potential negative ones, too.

Chapters 4-6

1. Max believes in the Sasquatch. Do you? Why, or why not? Is there something else fantastical you believe in?
2. In Chapter 5, Hannah finds the spindle whorl. Have you ever discovered something really exciting? What was it, and what did you do with it?
3. Hannah keeps a diary. Do you? Why, or why not? She writes a lot about her dreams. Why do you think her dreams are important to the story?

Chapters 7-9

1. In Chapter 7, Hannah and Max learn a lot from Mr. Sullivan, who works at the Royal BC Museum. Have you ever been to a museum? Describe your favourite exhibit.
2. Choose a place that you know very well. Describe how it looks. Now think about how this place might look 150 years ago. Describe how the scenery would be different.
3. Why does Hannah get upset with Max at the end of Chapter 9? Do you think she had a right to get upset, even though Max doesn't understand the reason?

Chapter 10-12

1. Hannah, Max, and Mr. Sullivan's team discover a pictograph while exploring the archaeological site. What do you think is the significance of the pictograph? What is it showing the reader?
2. The raven is a very important figure in west coast First Nations culture. Why do you think ravens are so mysterious? Think of an idea for a story that includes a raven, and write at least two sentences explaining your idea.

3. Hannah's mom used to tell her that she had, "enough imagination for two". Have you ever scared yourself by imagining things that weren't there? Do you think Hannah imagines the voice she keeps hearing, or do you think it is someone, or something else?

Chapters 13-15

1. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who didn't speak English? How did you accomplish it? If not, imagine a situation where you would. How do you think you would communicate?
2. Hannah brings her backpack into the past with her. If you were time travelling and could bring *your* backpack, what would you bring, and why?
3. Hannah's mother was teaching her how to knit before she passed away. Talk about a skill that somebody special in your life has taught you.

Chapters 16-18

1. The "Nahnum", or "Fire Circle" is an important gathering ritual for the Quw'utsun people. Talk about an aspect of your heritage, and a special ceremony or custom that takes place in your culture.
2. Why do you think Nutsa is distrustful of Hannah's presence in Tl'ulpalus?
3. Some interesting things happen in chapter 18. Do you think Nutsa pushed Hannah into the river? Do you think the Thumquas (or Sasquatch) helped to save Hannah? Explain your answers.

Chapters 19-21

1. Why is it important for Hannah to talk to Yisella about her own mother?
2. Why do you think Hannah was transported back in time to Yisella's village? Give two possible reasons based on what we have read so far.
3. Hannah loves cats, and Poos makes her feel better about being in a strange place. Do you have a special pet? Why do you think people have pets?

Chapters 22-24

1. The First Nations people are nervous about the hwunitum. Why do you think this is? Why do they feel as though they have to be prepared?

2. If you were left behind the way Hannah and Yisella are in chapter 23, would you react the way Hannah did, or Yisella? Why?
3. Why do you think the European woman thinks the First Nations people are “uncivilized?” Do you think she fully understands the way the Quw’utsun people live, the way that Hannah does?

Chapter 25-27

1. In chapter 25, Hannah looks back at some of her old diary entries, thinking they sound a bit silly. How has Hannah’s experience changed her?
2. Why do you think Yisella is so anxious to know what happens to her mother’s spindle whorl? Name an object in your life that you wouldn’t want damaged. Why is this object special to you?
3. In the last chapter of the novel, Hannah returns to the present. What would you say to a friend if they told you that they travelled back in time? What do you think Poos coming with Hannah into the future proves? Why does Hannah begin knitting at the end of the chapter?

After Reading:

Say:

Discuss as a class some questions you have regarding the novel. Brainstorm three questions you would like to ask the author, Carol Anne Shaw, and then post them on her website. (www.carolanneshaw.com)

Write:

As a class, discuss descriptive language. Brainstorm some words that could be used to describe a beach. Post a picture of Cowichan Bay somewhere in the room (in hard copy or digital) and have students write two descriptive paragraphs based on the photograph: one about present day Cowichan Bay, and the other about what Cowichan Bay might have looked like in days gone by.

Do:

Hannah and Yisella’s friendship overcomes time and two very different cultures. Choose one of the following activities to show the importance of friendship.

- a) Make a “friendship” poster comparing and contrasting Hannah’s life with Yisella’s. Be sure to include the important things in their lives, their similarities, and why they are friends. Try to use pictures, more than words.

- b) Create a word cloud using phrases from the book, as well as important details of Hannah and Yisella's friendship. This can be done by hand, or with online tools such as Wordle, Tagxedo, Word it Out, or the many others available.

- c) Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Hannah and Yisella. The middle should represent the reasons they are friends. This could be done using images rather than words.

Draw:

The teacher will choose to read from several descriptive passages in the novel. Students will create a visual entry in their journals that illustrates each of the readings.