

Hedgewitch

AUTHOR

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SYNOPSIS

It has been seven years since Cassie Morgan last saw her mother. Left at a dreary boarding school, she spends her days hiding from the school bully and reading forbidden story books about the world of Faerie.

Certain that her mother is still alive, Cassie is determined to find her, whatever the dangers, and runs away from school. Lost and alone, she is chased by a pack of goblins but, to her surprise, escapes with the help of a flying broom and a talking cat named Montague, who takes her to the cosy village of Hedgely.

Here she discovers that she comes from a family of witches, women who protect Britain from the denizens of Faerie, who are all too real and far more frightening than her story books suggest.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Skye McKenna grew up in the iron ore mining town of Newman in the Australian outback. Surrounded by the red dust of the Great Sandy Desert, she developed a healthy respect for wild things and wild places at a young age. Longing for adventures of her own, she travelled to England and fell in love with the British countryside. Skye now works in heritage and recently curated the Magic & Mystery exhibition for Barley Hall, York, introducing visitors to real and legendary wizards and alchemists and developing activities for school children and families visiting the exhibition.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, examine the image on the front and back cover of the novel and write a short paragraph to explain your reaction to it. How does the cover make you feel, what genre of book do you expect, and what sort of things do you think might occur in the novel? After finishing the novel, go back to this paragraph to see whether your predictions of genre and events were correct.
- 'Cassie sat up and peered at the wall calendar which showed a drooping daffodil. It was April 30th, the anniversary of her arrival at Fowell House. Cassie fell back against the mattress, which squeaked in surprise...Another year had passed and she found it harder and harder to believe her mother was ever coming back.' (pp 27-28)
 - Read the above extract and answer the following questions:
 - How long has Cassie been at Fowell House?
 - Can you think of three words to describe Cassie's time at Fowell House so far?
 - What do you think the word 'inconspicuous' might mean?

- Why does Cassie keep the key a secret?
- Why is the key important to Cassie?
- How does Cassie feel when she holds the key in her hand? What thoughts might be going through her mind?
- Think about a hobby or activity that you really enjoy such as skateboarding, baking, rock climbing or reading. What skills does this activity involve? Can you design some skills badges for your chosen activity? You might like to include badges for skills you've already mastered and badges for skills you hope to achieve. Above each design, write the name of the badge and below the design write a description of the tasks that must be completed to earn this badge.
- Go for a walk somewhere there are plenty of trees—perhaps in your school grounds or a nearby park or bush area. Take a tape measure, clipboard, paper and pencil. Can you find the tree trunk in your area with the largest circumference?
 - Use your imagination to answer these questions and discuss them with your class:
 - If this tree could see, what might it have seen during its lifetime?
 - If this tree could hear, what sounds might it have heard?
 - What memories might this tree have?
 - What do you think this tree might feel?
 - If this tree could talk, what do you think it might say? Do you think it might have any questions or advice for humans?
- Choose one of the houses in Hedgely (have a look at the map for ideas). Imagine you are a real estate agent and you have been tasked with selling this house. How would you persuade somebody to buy it? What could you tell them about Hedgely? How could you make living near The Hedge sound really appealing? Write a brochure for the house. Use strong persuasive language to convince your reader that this is the ideal home and location for them!
- Write your own version of the song on pp 146–147. Use a similar structure and rhyme scheme but instead of writing your song about a coven, write it about your class. What do you like about your class and what do you enjoy doing together?
- In Chapter 12 (p 155), we learn a bit more about Ivy's family. Write a diary entry from the point of view of Ivy. How do you think Ivy feels about Cassie joining the coven? What are her hopes and fears?
- Tabitha's grandmother has a spell for finding her gloves because she is always losing them (pp 200-201). Write a rhyming 'spell' of your own for something that's always going missing such as a sock, your little brother's favourite toy, your mum's car keys or the white board pens in your classroom.
- On page 401, 'The Argent Star' is awarded 'in recognition of bravery, skill and service to the community'. Describe what you think the word 'community' means. Can you think of someone in your community who deserves recognition for their service? Present a speech to your class describing what this person does/did and why you think their work is important.