

The Amish Novel Study

Grades 7-8

Written by Darlene Boudon
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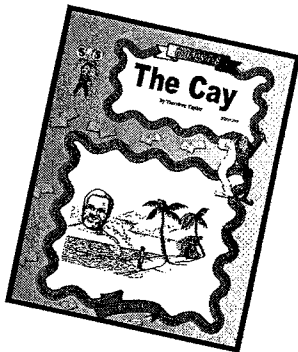
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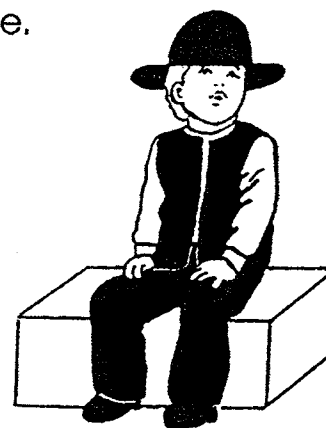
Objectives:

1. To make student more aware of the life style, beliefs and culture of the Amish people.
2. To develop a tolerance to people who may live in a different manner.
3. To gain information about a subject by reading literature.
4. To enjoy the writings of a Canadian author.

Summary of the Story

AMISH ADVENTURE

by Barbara Smucker
(Puffin Books 1984)



"Amish Adventure" is a captivating story of a young 12-year old boy, named Ian McDonald from Chicago who, because of a tragic accident, spends an extended stay with an Amish family in Waterloo County near Kitchener, Ontario.

As the story opens, Ian and his father, (a widowed, environmental engineer) are planning to move from their Chicago high-rise to Inuvik, in the Northwest Territories. Three weeks before they are to move, the engineering company decides that Ian should not accompany his father on this trip. Because Ian's mother died when he was born, Ian is forced to stay with his Aunt Clem in Toronto, Canada. Jack Turner, a co-worker who is going to Toronto for a business meeting, is to deliver Ian to Aunt Clem's. The pair are forced to detour from the 401 near Waterloo County because of an accident that has occurred on the slick, wet highway.

While traveling the county road in the downpour, Jack Turner recklessly crashes into an Amish buggy traveling on the shoulder of the road. While the police are investigating the accident, an Amish family offers Ian a place at their farm. It is here that Ian's Amish Adventure begins.

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Immediately, Ian is included in the Amish family routines. The first evening, on the farm, he is introduced to the rituals of Amish family life and evening chores. Instead of staying for a few days, Ian stays for over three months. During this time he goes to school, learns to plow and is subjected to the abuse of an intolerant area youth named Pete Moss. It is through Ian's exposure to the Amish, that he comes to understand himself.

"Amish Adventure" is a story of friendship, of multiculturalism, of tolerance, of contrasts skillfully woven against the backdrop of Amish culture.

The numerous themes winding through the novel resemble the piecing of an Amish quilt. Obvious yet unobtrusive. Layered yet blended.

Author Biography

Barbara Smucker

Barbara Smucker's books are familiar to young readers. Her work includes "Incredible Jumbo" about the world-famous circus elephant killed by a train in St. Thomas, "Underground to Canada," about the escape of Black slaves from the southern states to freedom in Canada, and "Jacob's Little Giant," the story of a newborn Canada Goose. Other books by Ms. Smucker include "Garth and the Mermaid," "Days of Terror".

Although she was born and educated in Kansas, U.S.A., Barbara Smucker has lived in Canada since 1969. She and her husband, Donovan, a Mennonite minister, have lived and worked in Waterloo, Ontario since 1969. The Smucker's have three children.

Ms. Smucker often gives readings of her writings at public libraries. Her awards include the Canada Council's Children's Literature Prize and the Vicky Metcalf Award for a body of work. She has also received two honorary degrees: a Doctor of Letters from the University of Waterloo, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from Bluffton College (Ohio).

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The Amish are named for their founder, Jacob Ammann.
- The sect was founded in 1694.
- The Amish originated in an area called the Palatinate in Europe where the Switzerland, Germany and French borders meet.
- The sect was formed because Jacob Ammann insisted upon a return to Meidung (shunning), foot washing and dressing alike. They were called Anabaptists because they did not believe in baptizing babies into the faith. They believe that the individual should choose the faith.
- In 1681, William Penn, a Quaker was granted a tract of land in what is now known as Pennsylvania (meaning Penn's Woods). In 1700 he invited all religious sects who had been persecuted in the war of the Palatinate (1688 - 1697) to come to America where he promised them religious freedom.
- The Amish belief in "*conscientious objection*" to all wars stems from the persecutions they suffered during the War of the Palatinate.
- On October 8, 1737 the "Charming Nancy" arrived in the port of Philadelphia. carrying the first Amish immigrants.
- The new immigrants moved west to what is now Lancaster County.
- During the War of Independence between the U.S.A. and Britain, many Amish moved to Waterloo County in Ontario.
- Although there are no longer any Amish communities in Europe, there are many communities in the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana Iowa, New York and in the province of Ontario.