

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

The House of Dies Drear

Virginia Hamilton

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THE HOUSE OF DIES DREAR

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

The Collier paperback edition of the book was used to prepare this guide. The page references may differ in the hardcover or other paperback editions.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Skills and Strategies

Listening/Speaking

Role play, interview, drama,
mime

Thinking

Visualization, research

Comprehension

Comparison/contrast,
predicting

Writing

Journal, chapter titles

Vocabulary

Word mapping, antonyms/
synonyms

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements, theme

Supplementary Activity:

Writing: If you were Thomas, write the entry for the day in your journal. If you were Pluto, write the entry for the day in your journal.

Chapter 15—Pages 199-211; Chapter 16—Pages 212-225

Vocabulary:

heritage 204 venture 208 anguish 215 hypodermic 216
pensively 218 reprimand 218 curiosity 225

Vocabulary Activity:

Make a vocabulary activity for a classmate. Use more than the vocabulary from just these chapters. Pick five words and write synonyms. Arrange the words and synonyms so they may be matched to the answer key.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. Why did the second Mr. Pluto wear a costume? (Page 200, *He didn't think the Snalls would be easy to convince especially if he had to face them in daytime.*)
2. What clue gave the second Mr. Pluto away? (page 200, *the new gloves he wore*)
3. Why did Mayhew Skinner dress in a costume? (He was afraid, believing his father was getting old and was not sure he could lose his battle with the Darrow family. He did not want them to set foot in his cave and they would stay as long as he could frighten them, being devilish.)
4. What was Mayhew Skinner's story? (page 203, *he had grown up living in the cave but he and his mother left when they could no longer stand the house and the town folk who thought they were strange. Mayhew Skinner worked as a laborer,*
5. Why did Mayhew Skinner unlock the furniture with the help of the Carr boys? (Mr. Pluto had made up his mind to trust the Snalls. He wasn't strong enough to unload the furniture and place it in the rooms so he was helped.)
6. Did Mayhew Skinner know about the cave and all of its treasures? (Page 206, *"no, never...Not until a week ago, when my father decided he was mortal. I told him of us, and thought it was time to tell me."*)
7. How did Mayhew Skinner think his father was a slave to the treasure? (Pages 206-207, *"It was his to hold, to take care of just the way the old man had...But not to plunder, no, not to touch!" "If they do, you have any idea how close you and Drear have become?...And you, Pluto, still love it, for, like a slave, you are bound to it simply because a trouble maker named Dies Drear says you are!"*)

8. Who made the mess in the Smalls' kitchen? (page 210, Wilbur, Russell and River Ross Darrow)
9. What plan did Mayhew have for getting the Darrow boys over to the cave? (Page 218, Sending Mr. Pluto off to the hospital so the Darrows would feel free to search for treasure; Page 223, Mayhew and the Smalls would dress up as slave ghosts to scare the Darrows.)
10. Clue: What did the Smalls learn about the mirror? (Page 220, The mirror hid a false wall that lead down to a tunnel.)

Supplementary Activity:

Drama: In a monologue, there is only one speaker, who reveals his thoughts and feelings. Pretend that you are Timmas. In a monologue, describe what has happened to you.

Chapter 17— Pages 226-244; Chapter 18—Pages 245-262

Vocabulary

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| conces 226 | shroud 226 | premonition 229 | distorted 231 |
| dank 231 | steafastness 241 | phosphorous 246 | subtle 246 |
| gossamer 247 | menacingly 248 | colleague 249 | gawking 249 |
| spectacular 251 | apparition 251 | translucent 258 | tormentors 259 |

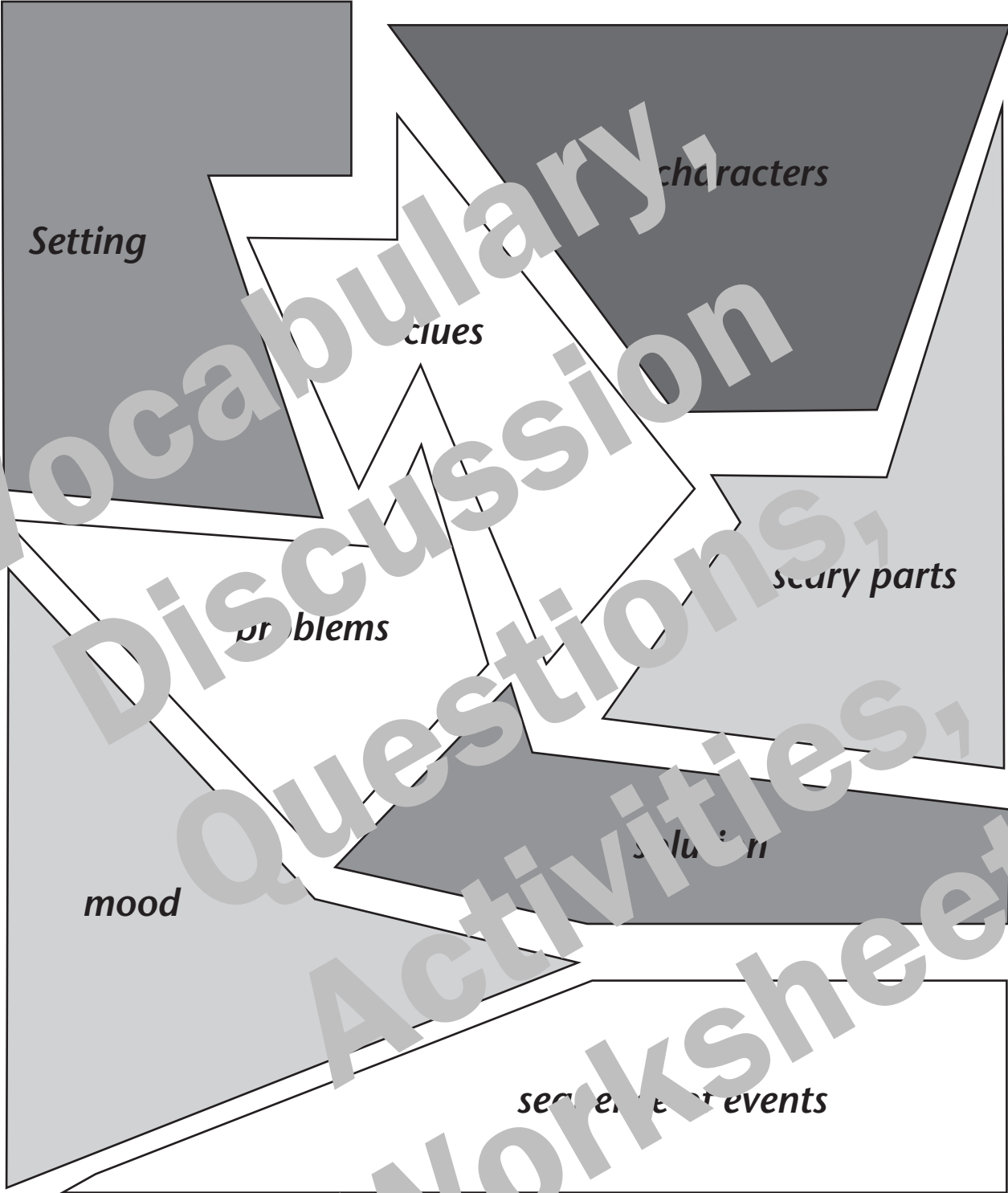
Vocabulary Activity:

Write the vocabulary words for the day on index sheets or paper. Leave space for students to: a) illustrate the meaning next to each word; b) list a memory device to remember the word.

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why was Timmas wrong to think the treasures were his? (Page 227, " 'No, not yours,' said Mr. Mayhew. 'If any one of us were to die, the inheritance could come claim it at any time. They own all this land and these caves, too. It's not yours. It's no man's.'")
2. Did Pluto have any right to the land or the treasures? (Page 229, In the last will and testament of Dies Drear: "I willed this cavern and whatever is found in it to the first son of slaves who was able to find it.") How do you think a judge and court of law would look at this will? (Page 240, Mr. Small said, "I did not believe a court would uphold the will of Dies Drear.")
3. Where did the tales of treasure come from? (Page 230, The third slave who escaped the bounty hunter and went to the island.)

Mystery Story Puzzle



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Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on prediction and to review the stories.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own knowledge.

Use new information that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions:

Character Chart

Feeling	Thomas	Mr. Small	Mr. Pluto	The Darrows	Mrs. Small
Frustration					
Anger					
Fear					
Humiliation					
Relief					