

Focus **ON READING**

*Tuck
Everlasting*

G.K. QUINN

This is a sample not intended for classroom use.



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Introduction/Classroom Management

WELCOME TO *FOCUS ON READING*

Focus on Reading literature study guides are designed to help all students comprehend and analyze their reading. Many teachers have grappled with the question of how to make quality literature accessible to all students. Students who are already avid readers of quality literature are motivated to read and are familiar with prereading and reading strategies. However, struggling readers frequently lack basic reading skills and are not equipped with the prior knowledge and reading strategies to thoroughly engage in the classroom literature experience.

Focus on Reading is designed to make teachers' and students' lives easier! How? By providing materials that allow all students to take part in reading quality literature. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains activities that focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills that students need to get the most from their reading. In addition, each section within the guide contains a before-reading **Focus Your Reading** page containing tools to ensure success: **Vocabulary Words to Know**, **Things to Know**, and **Questions to Think About**. These study aids will help students who may not have the prior knowledge they need to truly comprehend the reading.

USING *FOCUS ON READING*

Focus on Reading is designed to make it easy for you to meet the individual needs of students who require additional reading skills support. Each *Focus on Reading* study guide contains teacher and student support materials, reproducible student activity sheets, an end-of-book test, and an answer key.

- **Focus on the Book**, a convenient reference page for the teacher, provides a brief overview of the entire book including a synopsis, information about the setting, author data, and historical background.
- **Focus Your Knowledge**, a reference page for students, is a whole-book, prereading activity designed to activate prior knowledge and immerse students in the topic.

The study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable sections to make it easy to plan classroom time. Five activities are devoted to each section of the novel.

Before Reading

- **Focus Your Reading** consists of 3 prereading sections:

Vocabulary Words to Know lists and defines 10 vocabulary words students will encounter in their reading. Students will not have to interrupt their reading to look up, ask for, or spend a lot of time figuring out the meaning of unfamiliar words. These words are later studied in-depth within the lesson.

Things to Know identifies terms or concepts that are integral to the reading but that may not be familiar to today's students. This section is intended to "level the playing field" for those students who may not have much prior knowledge about the time period, culture, or theme of the book. It also gets students involved with the book, increasing interest before they begin reading.

Questions to Think About helps students focus on the main ideas and important details they should be looking for as they read. This activity helps give students a *purpose* for reading. The goal of these guiding questions is to build knowledge, confidence, and comfort with the topics in the reading.

During Reading

- **Build Your Vocabulary** presents the 10 unit focus words in the exact context of the book. Students are then asked to write their own definitions and sentences for the words.
- **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** offers 10 multiple-choice, literal comprehension questions for each section.

Check Your Understanding: Short Answer contains 10 short-answer questions based on the reading.

After Reading

- **Deepen Your Understanding** is a writing activity that extends appreciation and analysis of the book. This activity focuses on critical-thinking skills and literary analysis.
- **End-of-Book Test** contains 20 multiple-choice items covering the book. These items ask questions that require students to synthesize the information in the book and make inferences in their answers.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Focus on Reading is very flexible. It can be used by the whole class, by small groups, or by individuals. Each study guide divides the novel into 6 manageable units of study.

This literature comprehension program is simple to use. Just photocopy the lessons and distribute them at the appropriate time as students read the novel.

You may want to reproduce and discuss the **Focus Your Knowledge** page before distributing the paperbacks. This page develops and activates prior knowledge to ensure that students have a grounding in the book before beginning reading. After reading this whole-book prereading page, students are ready to dive into the book.

The **Focus Your Reading** prereading activities are the keystone of this program. They prepare students for what they are going to read, providing focus for the complex task of reading. These pages should be distributed before students actually begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. There are no questions to be answered on these pages; these are for reference and support during reading. Students may choose to take notes on these pages as they read. This will also give students a study tool for review before the **End-of-Book Test**.

The **Focus Your Reading** pages also provide an excellent bridge to home. Parents, mentors, tutors, or

other involved adults can review vocabulary words with students, offer their own insights about the historical and cultural background outlined, and become familiar with the ideas students will be reading about. This can help families talk to students in a meaningful way about their reading, and it gives the adults something concrete to ask about to be sure that students are reading and understanding.

The **Build Your Vocabulary** and **Check Your Understanding: Multiple Choice** and **Short Answer** activities should be distributed when students begin reading the corresponding section of the novel. These literature guide pages are intended to help students comprehend and retain what they read; they should be available for students to refer to at any time during the reading.

Deepen Your Understanding is an optional extension activity that goes beyond literal questions about the book, asking students for their own ideas and opinions—and the reasons behind them. These postreading activities generally focus on literary analysis.

As reflected in its title, the **End-of-Book Test** is a postreading comprehension test to be completed after the entire novel has been read.

For your convenience, a clear **Answer Key** simplifies the scoring process.

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Focus on the Book

Synopsis

This is a story of a child gaining wisdom and courage. It is the story of a family that fatefully discovers a magic spring whose water, once drunk, prevents them from ever aging or ever dying. The water's magic powers change the family's relationship with all whom they come in contact with, making them outcasts, unable to live out a normal existence. It is a story of how ten-year-old Winnie Foster comes upon this family and learns its fantastic secret—and why it must be kept at all costs. Each of the Tucks explains his or her philosophy about the situation and whether it is a blessing or a curse. Winnie has to decide whether she even believes this strange story, and, if so, whether the Tucks' everlasting changelessness is to be embraced or shunned.

When an evil stranger stumbles upon the secret and makes plans to sell the water to the highest bidder, the mother of the family, in an act of desperation, kills the stranger to prevent the secret from being divulged. Winnie, now no longer a timid, self-centered child, volunteers to be smuggled into the prison cell where the mother is being held so that the mother and family may escape and their secret kept safe. Although Winnie knows the location of the magic spring, and its promise of endless youth, she ultimately chooses to live out a normal life. *Tuck Everlasting* is a story of deep truths seen through the eyes of a child who has experienced the darker side of a seemingly wonderful power.

About the Author

Natalie Babbitt is the author and illustrator of many acclaimed children's books of prose and verse besides *Tuck Everlasting*. Born and raised in Ohio, she majored in Art and taught School in Columbus and Smith College in Massachusetts. In 1966, she and her husband collaborated on *The Forty-Ninth Magician*, a children's book that he wrote and she illustrated. When her husband became president of Kirkland College, however, she found herself without a writer for her illustrations, and she took up writing herself.

In her first solo works, *Dick Foote and the Shark* and *Phoebe's Revolt*, she elected to write in rhyme. Her next work, *The Search for Delicious*, was prose, followed by *Kneeknock Rise* and *Goody Hall*. After this she

collaborated with Valerie North, illustrating her works, and then she wrote *Tuck Everlasting*, which has been hailed as a modern classic. Other children's novels include *The Eyes of the Amaryllis* and *Herbert Rowbarger*. *Publishers Weekly* has called the latter her crowning achievement, although for most of her readers, *Tuck Everlasting* would be easily rated their favorite.

Historical Background

The story *Tuck Everlasting* takes place during August 1880, when the protagonist of the story, Winnie Foster, is ten years old. The late decades of the 1800s were marked by great inventions that would change the largely rural character of the United States. Indeed, when Winnie was born in 1870, the war that ensured the preservation of the Union, the Civil War, had only recently ended, in April 1865. Railroads and telegraph wires stretched coast to coast by 1870. And by the time Winnie was ten, Thomas Edison had invented the incandescent light bulb, a relatively cheap and reliable device that perhaps even more than the automobile profoundly changed everyday life in America. It led to the mass electrification of America that made possible the presence of radios, television sets, and electrical appliances of all types commonplace in American homes today.

In the four-week period that the story takes place, the village of Treenap is totally unlike what a town in rural America would be like today. The heat is oppressive with no relief. The roads are unpaved and dusty. There is no such thing as running water or indoor plumbing. Work is largely backbreaking manual labor.

Although Edison's electric bulb was invented in 1879, it would be years before rural America, where the story takes place, was electrified. In the Epilogue, the Tucks return to Treenap in 1950, some seventy years after the year in which the story occurs. Not only was Treenap different from what they remembered, but America was vastly different. Even though the Tucks still traveled by horse and cart, cars were everywhere. Television was still in its infancy but would continue to grow. In Winnie's lifetime (1870–1948), she would have witnessed extraordinary change.

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Focus Your Knowledge

Tuck Everlasting is a story about change and growth. Winnie Foster, a ten-year-old girl living in the late 1800s, is faced with some big decisions. She has always been very sheltered by her family, and she has not had to make many choices. The decisions she must make have huge consequences for her and for others.

- Imagine that you are faced with a difficult decision, and you do not have much experience or information to help you. Who would you ask for advice? What resources would you use to help you with your decision?
- Winnie lives in the American West of about one hundred twenty years ago. What do you know about the technology of the time? What were the main occupations of people in the country? Of people in the city? What were the roles of women and men?
- Winnie finds herself isolated from other children geographically (she lives away from the town), emotionally (she doesn't have brothers, sisters, or close friends), and financially (her family is much better off than other families.) How do you think this would make her feel about other children? How do you think it would make other children feel about her?
- Some crimes are committed in this novel, including kidnapping, extortion (getting something from someone else by threats), murder, and obstructing (blocking) justice. Are there any circumstances in which some crimes may be justified?

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Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

tangent—an abrupt change of course; digression

bovine—relating to cows

veered—changed direction or course

forlorn—miserable; very sad

accessible—within reach; approachable

melancholy—sad; downhearted

rueful—sorrowful; regretful

exasperated—upset; annoyed

retorted—answered back sharply

remnants—remains; leftover parts

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Treegap is a fictional town in the rural American West.

At the time of the story, which begins at the height of August, there was no air conditioning to provide relief from the heat and no electricity to power appliances such as air conditioners.

Farming was the main occupation of people in the rural United States at the time of *Tuck Everlasting*. Blacksmiths, people who worked with iron, repaired broken farm equipment and shod horses, and there were retail stores that sold general supplies. There were also inns and taverns. Most things were made or done by hand, or with the help of farm animals and hand tools.

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Because there was no indoor plumbing except for, perhaps, a hand-operated pump, it was not unusual for people to get their water from streams and **springs**. A spring plays an important part in this story.

A **marionette** is a type of puppet. A puppeteer moves a marionette by pulling on strings attached to the puppet's limbs. Marionettes tend to move rather jerkily.

“**Stiff black ribbons**” hung on a door refer to a sign of a family's mourning. The black ribbons meant that a family member had died.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. How does the author build mystery about the wood?
2. In the first section, the reader is introduced to Mae and Pa Tuck. What is odd about them?
3. What is Winnie's unusual reason for wanting a new name?
4. From her conversation with the toad, do you think Winnie is serious about running away?
5. Why do you think the grandmother insists the music heard in the wood is made by elves? What does this tell you about Winnie's family and about Winnie?

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Build Your Vocabulary

Read the sentences below. On the line, write your definition of the word in bold type. Then, on another sheet of paper, use that word in a new sentence of your own.

1. “It wandered along in curves and easy angles, swayed off and up in a pleasant **tangent** to the top of the small hill, ambled down again between fringes of bee-hung clover, and then cut sidewise across a meadow.”

tangent: _____

2. “It widened and seemed to pause, suggesting tranquil **bovine** picnics: slow chewing and thoughtful contemplation of the infinite.”

bovine: _____

3. “But on reaching the shadows of the first trees, it **veered** sharply, swung out in a wide arc as if, for the first time, it had reason to think where it was going, and passed around.”

veered: _____

4. “And all at once the sun was uncomfortably hot, the dust oppressive, and the meager grass along its edges somewhat ragged and **forlorn**.”

forlorn: _____

5. “. . . it belonged to the Fosters, the owners of the touch-me-not cottage, and was therefore private property in spite of the fact that it lay outside the fence and was perfectly **accessible**.”

accessible: _____

6. “He was still asleep, and the **melancholy** creases that folded his daytime face were smoothed and slack.”

melancholy: _____

7. “Tuck rolled over and made a **rueful** face at her. ‘What in the world could possibly happen to me?’”

rueful: _____

8. “‘All *right!* I’m coming!’ she cried, **exasperated**, and then added quickly, ‘I mean, I’ll be right there, Mama.’”

exasperated: _____

9. “‘How delightful to see you looking so fit.’ ‘And why shouldn’t I be fit?’ she **retorted**, peering at him through the fading light.”

retorted: _____

10. “The last stains of sunset had melted away, and the twilight died, too, as he stood there, though its **remnants** clung reluctantly to everything that was pale in color. . . .”

remnants: _____

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Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- How many seemingly unconnected things happen on a single day in the first week of August?
 - two
 - three
 - four
- Who is Mae Tuck setting off to see?
 - her long-lost cousin
 - a mysterious stranger
 - her two sons
- Winnie Foster thinks about doing what?
 - running away
 - buying a new dress
 - capturing a toad
- What does the appearance of the Fosters' wood make people want to do?
 - detour around it
 - speak in whispers
 - throw stones at it
- What is unique about the Tucks?
 - They avoid other people.
 - Their appearance hasn't changed in eighty-seven years.
 - They wear old-fashioned clothes.
- What is the treasured object that Mae Tuck takes with her wherever she goes?
 - a charm bracelet
 - a music box
 - a metal brooch
- Why does Winnie want to run away?
 - She wants to do something important that will make a difference in the world.
 - She is bored with her life.
 - She doesn't have a pet.
- Why does Winnie decide she wouldn't want to make the toad a pet?
 - He is ugly.
 - He isn't friendly.
 - She doesn't want to keep him cooped up in a cage.
- What does the stranger say he is looking for?
 - a shortcut through the wood
 - a family
 - a wife
- What does Winnie's grandmother say makes the music heard coming from the wood?
 - a music box
 - the wind blowing in the trees
 - elves

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Check Your Understanding

Short Answer

Write a short answer to each question.

1. What is there about the first week of August that sets it apart from the rest of summer?
2. What is it about the road that leads to Treegap that suggests it was laid out by a herd of cows?
3. How is Winnie's house described?
4. Why isn't Winnie curious about the wood?
5. If the road hadn't swung around the wood but instead went right through it, what would the people probably have noticed that would have changed their lives?
6. Why does Mae tell Tuck it is no use having "that dream"?
7. Why does Mae feel it will be safe for her to meet their sons?
8. If Winnie had a brother or a sister, what would that do for her?
9. Who does Winnie tell that she is going to run away?
10. What does the music in the wood sound like to Winnie?

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Deepen Your Understanding

Mood refers to the emotional feeling, or atmosphere, of a story. The author uses word imagery to describe what the first week of August is like, and to establish a sense of mystery about the wood. Select some of the words and expressions she uses to describe the week in which the story takes place. How do these descriptive words make you feel? Why?

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