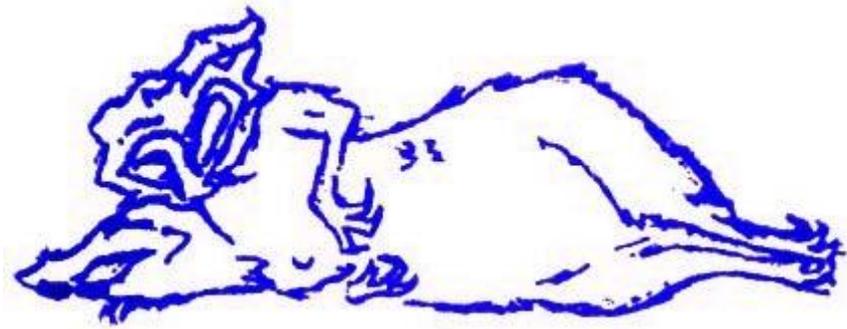


The Ghost, The Rat, and Me

Episode One (1/3)

Robyn Gioia



Discussion
Guide

for Educators and Parents



*Winking Owl
Publications*

The Ghost, The Rat, and Me is a fun, middle school mystery written in three episodes. It is available as an [eBook](#) (and later by paperback) from Amazon. The eBook can be read on an iPad, tablet, Kindle, iPhone, desktop computer and projected onscreen. The storyline follows the old serial style of presenting stories in episodes.

Comprehension questions and discussion questions in this guide cover ***Episode One***. Quizzes, tests and project ideas are available separately.



About the Author: Award winning author/teacher Robyn Gioia began her writing adventure with an eclectic group of writers during a three year stay in England. Once referred to as Scheherazade, she is known for her character driven, can't put down, page turning stories for middle school kids. *The Ghost, The Rat, and Me* is a who-dun-it mystery involving two best friends; Bell Olson, eighth grade sleuth and her best friend, Temple, who has come back as a ghost. When donning her teacher hat, she's also writes historical fiction and non-fiction books for middle school. Her controversial, history resource book, *America's REAL First Thanksgiving, St. Augustine, Florida, Sept.8, 1565* has been featured on the front page of the USA Today Life section. <http://www.robyngioia.com>

Synopsis

Campbell (Bell) Olson's best friend Temple was killed in a car accident. She thought the pain would last forever. Then something unbelievable happens. Temple returns as a ghost. When Bell signs up to run for eighth grade president, a dead rat with a mysterious note attached to the neck appears on her doorstep. She knows it's her obnoxious opponent, the most popular guy in school, but can't prove it. She and Temple team up to catch the person behind the mysterious trail of clues. But it's not long before Temple realizes things aren't as they seem and he can't tell Bell. He knows it's stop the culprit or something catastrophic will happen.

Suggestions for reading *The Ghost, The Rat and Me*

Read/discuss for book club.

Read/discuss with a friend or family member.

Read/discuss with a class, group.

Use the Socratic method of questioning. Readers sit in a circle around the discussion leader. The discussion leader poses a thought provoking question so members of the group can explore the reasoning or driving force behind the answer. Note: the discussion leader does not make judgments or comments. The leader refers comments back to the group for further exploration. Example: What and how do emotions drive Bell? Is this good or bad?

Literature Circles

Literature circles are a wonderful way for readers to discuss stories in depth. There are many ways to implement literature circles. Feel free to use the style that suits your students the best.



- Assign a section for each student to read independently, with a buddy, or with a group. Ideally, students should read the text at least twice: the first time independently and the second time with another student practicing fluency. ESL students learn through repetition and would benefit from being exposed to each section of text at least four times.
- Have students highlight the focus areas on the eBook reader or sticky note the pages in the paperback. For example, if *character traits are the lesson's focus, instruct students to highlight or sticky note examples of character in the story to share in literature circle or for character mapping. * If you Google "character traits" you will find many wonderful lists online.

Literary elements to explore:

character traits
foreshadowing
emotion
point of view
similes
theme
internal thought
man vs. nature

antagonist
protagonist
conflict
metaphors
mood
tone
man vs. society
cause and effect

plot
back story
setting
symbolism
genre
action
man vs. self

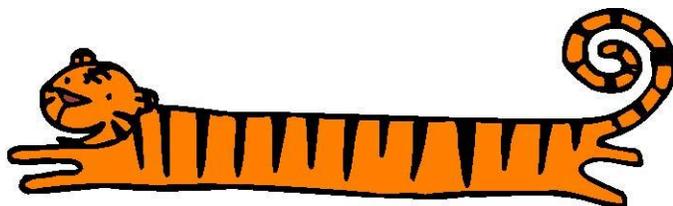
Individual Student work:

- Define teacher selected or student selected vocabulary words. Use in a sentence. Sort into categories. For differentiation, vocabulary words should be selected according to the various levels. ESL will have a greater need for words already mastered by native speakers. For higher ability students, let them identify words they do not know or have them find synonyms for the assigned vocabulary words to use in a sentence. Extension: use the synonyms to add a new paragraph(s) to the storyline.
- Answer discussion questions in a journal, restating the question and giving evidence from the book.
- Write one interpretive question (a question that does not have a factual answer but is interpreted from events) and one factual question, to be discussed in the literature circle. Answers to the interpretive and factual questions should be included in the student's journal.
- A (student) discussion director leads the group in vocabulary word meaning, highlighted and sticky noted sections of text, and discussion questions. Students take turns asking their own interpretive and factual question. Challenge option: The discussion director proposes his or her

own higher-level thinking skill questions. Example: How would events have changed if Temple had not come to the cemetery? Do you think the rat is symbolic?

- After students meet for literature circle, they return to their seats and write their reflections in their journal. They may also illustrated favorite scenes with details from the story.

Note: It is important that each student have their reading and independent work completed before meeting in literature circle.



Discussion Questions

Below are *possible* discussion questions. Use them all, add your own, or use just a few. Tailor them to your needs. You may tier the difficulty of the questions by giving the more challenging questions to the more capable groups, the more basic questions to the group needing more support etc... Come together after literature circle as a whole class to discuss and cover all the answers.

The Note/It Begins:

Vocabulary: meticulous, torment, retort, nemesis, archenemy, groupies, befuddled, delusional, perimeter, Queen of Sheba, awesomeness, contemplated, glittery, cauldron, vexed, hologram, nerd, molecules, guardian, Napoleon

Comprehension/Discussion questions:

1. What is the setting? Where does Bell find the note and what does it look like?
2. Who is Bell's nemesis and why?
3. Does Bell like Will Tuffy? Why or why not?
4. What pranks has Will Tuffy played on the other kids?
5. What is the inner pain that Bell is suffering?
6. What does this sentence mean: *If the eyes really are windows to the soul, he'd see what a mess I am inside.*
7. How would you describe Bell? What do her character traits tell us about her?
8. What is your impression of Bell and why?

9. Do you think Bell should be worried about having a presidential opponent like Will Tuffy? Why or why not? Do you know anyone like him?
10. What did Bell think when she read, *The Message*? What feelings did you have? In your own words, what does the message mean?
11. What happens to make Bell think Will Tuffy is spying on her?
12. What does Temple finally do to prove himself to Bell?
13. What is the relationship between Bell and Temple? What evidence tells us this?
14. What are Temple's character traits? What does he look like physically?
15. How does Temple explain his scientific ability to materialize as a recreated person?

The Unexpected Present

Vocabulary words: minions, brandish, damsel, grotesquely, apparition, Hunchback of Notre Dame, mutinous, scrutinizing, technically, insinuating, consequences, deranged, unrelenting, circumstances, corporeal, extenuating, mortal

1. How has life changed for Bell since the beginning of the story?
2. Why was Temple in such a grumpy mood when he showed up? How are looks important?
3. Do girls like Temple?
4. Why does Temple object to Bell being called Campbell? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
5. What is cell memory?
6. What are the rules Temple must follow?
7. Explain the debate between Bell and Temple on why he was, or was not, a person.
8. How did Bell feel about the message?
9. Why did Temple leave? Why did it take him so long to return?
10. How has Temple's return left Bell feeling at peace?
11. Why doesn't Bell want Temple to answer the door? What could be the consequences?
12. What did the rat look like?
13. Why is the rat important in the story?
14. What problem does the note introduce? Should Bell be worried?
15. Who are Prince William and Princess Kate?
16. Do you think Erin should go to the cemetery? Why or why not?
17. Should she take Temple since the note warns her against it? What would be the pros and cons of taking him?
18. What secret has the author kept from us? (secret weapon)

19. What does Bell decide at the end of this section and why?

20. Prediction: What will happen next?

Bagged

Vocabulary: horizon, gazillion, headstone, food critic, petiole, al dente noodles, gross, restrictions, dimension, moral codes, contradiction, nefarious, reincarnate, catnip, venom, antivenom, lugubrious, fork in the road, destiny, monument, padded, mantle

1. Describe the setting. What adjectives are used to paint the scene?
2. Who is Bell's relative?
3. What is special about her relative's headstone?
4. Why was Temple so happy to eat maple leaves? Have you ever done something like that?
5. What does this sentence mean: *I can see that eating maple leaves is way too progressive for you.*
6. Why did Temple object to Erin's relative being a pirate?
7. What do spiders do to ghosts?
8. What is Temple's emotional reaction when Bell asks him to turn back into a ghost?
9. What previous event makes Bell suspect Will Tuffy?
10. Describe the old maple tree? What makes it special for hiding?
11. What noises does Bell hear as she waits for the mystery person?
12. What happened to Bell after she stepped away from the tree? What problem does she have?

The Attacker

Vocabulary words: rhythm, stumbled, pathetic, photographic eyes, flaring, manufactured, bristled, smugly, banish, unimpressed, juvenile antics, mangled

1. Why couldn't Bell call for help?
2. Why does Bell think it's Will Tuffy?
3. What does Temple do when he arrives at the scene?
4. What did Temple mean when he said, "*You could use this bag for your campaign portrait—Campbell Olson, Your Eighth-Grade President! You want attention? You got it.*"
5. Describe both Temple's and Bell's mood at his arrival of her capture. How are they different and why?
6. Describe the bag that was used to cover Bell. Why do you think the culprit did this?

7. Why didn't Temple come?
8. What series of questions did Temple ask Bell? How did Temple's questions change Bell's mood?
9. Was Bell in real danger?
10. Did Bell find any answers at the cemetery?

All Eyes on Me

Vocabulary: confrontation, geek, gorgeous, psyche, rant, loathing, coward, pep rally, candidates, electorates, corny, glimmer, chaos, somersault, off-script, humiliation, niggling, audible, demeanor, Styrofoam, strutted

1. Describe the setting.
2. What point does Bell make about eye contact? Have you had a similar experience?
3. What happened between Will and Charlotte? Why did Bell object?
4. Describe Charlotte's character.
5. From Charlotte's physical description, can you make any assumptions about her life?
6. Why doesn't Bell stand up to Charlotte?
7. What emotion drives Charlotte to hate Bell and why?
8. Why was Bell stunned when she first saw her poster?
9. What did Bell do for an introduction to her speech?
10. What does Bell do when she goes off script? Was that a good choice or not?
11. Compare and contrast the two campaign posters. Explain the message that each is sending. Which is better in your opinion and why?

Food, Food, Yummy Food

Vocabulary: humor, peepers, lurking, grooving, vaudeville, cretins, shrewd, belittling, retribution, exquisite, remains

1. What game does Bell play with herself? Have you ever played any games with yourself?
2. What is a grand entrance?
3. Why is Bell worried about Temple materializing on the porch?
4. What snack does Grandpa leave for Bell? What does she do with it?
5. Why did Temple say Bell was his girlfriend?
6. What does the principal eat for lunch?

7. What does this sentence mean: *Getting his minions to make fun of you was belittling you in the eyes of the voter.*
8. What does Temple do to get even?
9. Describe Will Tuffy's house. How would this make it difficult for Bell?
10. What does Temple say are the two greatest pleasures of being a human being? Why do you think he would say that?
11. What sentence indicates foreshadowing?

The Box

Vocabulary: atomic trail, humiliating, smithereens, paranoid, crucified, maniac, berserk

1. What does Bell bring in from the porch and why is she worried about it?
2. What does Temple say to tease Bell?
3. Temple implies that he could probably tell where the box has been. Why won't he do it?
4. Who does Bell suspect?
5. List the similes you find and explain their meaning.
6. Why do you think Temple likes to tease Bell?
7. Retell the story of Bell and Temple at the Halloween story. Have you ever been to a party like that?

Rocky as a Mountain

Vocabulary: crackling, gashes, smoochy, nano-second, blood-curdling, discredit, pulsating, assumption, teeny-weeny, obstacles, pouty, jabbed

1. What did Bell find inside the box the first time?
2. Why does Temple argue with Bell over who looks inside the box? What happens?
3. What does Bell find inside the box next?
4. Who does Temple suggest sent the box?
5. Why do you think Temple doesn't like John Davis?
6. What does Bell find in the last box?
7. Bell uses a metaphor to describe her frustration at not finding anything. How is this metaphor relevant to the circumstances?
8. What does this quote mean: "*People hate whiners. That's why politicians don't whine. They 'spin' and that's a whole different chapter in the book of politics.*"

9. What does Temple say might happen if he doesn't know the rules of the Japanese Tea Ceremony? How could not knowing the rules effect how people react?
10. What does Bell eventually find? What do you think it means?

The Ski Mask

Vocabulary: voracious, devious, brutal, pondering, ascended, essence, rigorous, backstroke, breaststroke, mercury, hyperventilating, lopsided, deformed, oy, grimaced, elements, psyched, spiraled

1. What does Bell realize about the pros and cons of being a candidate?
2. Describe Temple's problem.
3. What happened to Temple?
4. Explain the emotion Bell was feeling when Temple broke apart.
5. What problem did she have when she tried to help?
6. What helps Bell think? Do you have something that helps you think?
7. What body part of Temple's did Bell find disturbing and why?
8. Why does Bell want to visit the rally?
9. What unexpected thing happens at the end of the chapter? Do you think someone was really there and if so, who?

Off to the Mine

Vocabulary: idjits, vermin, queasy, cocked, dweeb, scenario, toxic

1. Why was Bell worried about how Temple showed up? What could be the consequences?
2. What problem had Temple been working on? Why was he upset?
3. What does Temple say when Bell asks him what happened after he ran out of the house the day before?
4. What does Temple really miss? What would you miss?
5. Who is old man Wiffle?
6. Who did Temple see?
7. What debate does he and Bell have about what happened? Do you have a different idea? Who do you think is right?
8. Where are Temple and Bell heading?

The Press Section

Vocabulary: ornate, mass, sensation, cylinder, chameleon, translucent, musty, rafters, intimidating

1. What did Temple pull from his jacket and what did it look like?
2. What explanation did Temple offer for wanting to go undercover?
3. What gift does Temple offer to Bell?
4. What is a *want*?
5. Describe the feelings and emotions that Bell goes through when placing the locket over her head.
6. What happens when Bell becomes invisible?
7. Why is it important that Bell take off the locket?
8. Who pushes his way through the crowd and shows up unexpectedly?
9. What do you think Bell meant when she said: *The words here to interview the president too didn't register like it should have.*
10. Why does Bell leave the Press Section? What descriptive phrases and words indicate there is danger ahead?
11. What do you predict will happen next?

Locked

Vocabulary: suspicious, CIA, compartment, tumblers, authorities, premeditated, peered, whooshing

1. Is Bell worried? Why?
2. What problem do they run into as soon as they get to the mind entrance?
3. How does Temple solve the problem?
4. How does Bell feel about going into the mine illegally?
5. What sounds do you hear?
6. What happens inside the gift shop? Has anything suspicious happened?
7. What do you predict will happen next?