

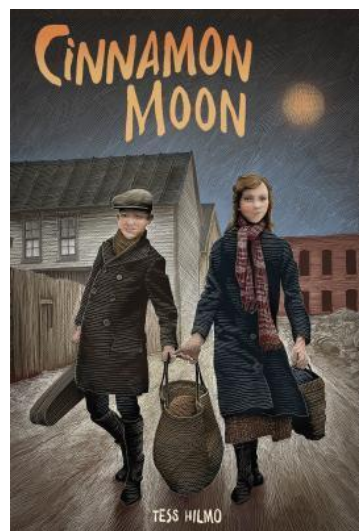
Discussion Guide

Cinnamon Moon

By: Tess Hilmo

On the same day as the Great Chicago Fire, America's deadliest fire took place 250 miles away in the poor lumber town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin. Twelve-year-old Ailis and her younger brother, Quinn, miraculously survived – but the rest of their family did not. Homeless and heartbroken, they are sent to live in a Chicago boardinghouse, where they meet six-year-old Nettie, an orphan displaced by Chicago's fire. When Nettie goes missing, Ailis and Quinn know they must do anything they can to find her.

Who is filching children from the streets of Chicago? And why? Will Ailis and Quinn be able to save Nettie so they can have the new beginning they'd hoped for?



As in Hilmo's previous works (*With a Name Like Love* and *Skies Like These*), the relationships between characters subtly highlight themes such as overcoming discrimination, handling grief, and being true to oneself. Hilmo's setting abounds with historically rich details that give depth to the characters and keep the plot moving quickly . . . A compelling read about two lesser-known historical events and their aftermath; a strong addition to middle grade collections in need of historical fiction.

—School Library Journal

The many realistic details of their daily lives will help draw readers into the story. Whether woven into the novel or included in the appended author's note, the Peshtigo and Chicago fire-related information is intriguing. A well-researched and well-imagined historical novel. – ***Booklist***

Don't miss other great novels by Tess Hilmo: *With a Name Like Love*, *Skies Like These*

CINNAMON MOON

Farrar, Straus and Giroux/Macmillan

Recommended for ages 10-12

ISBN: 978-0374302825

Discussion Questions

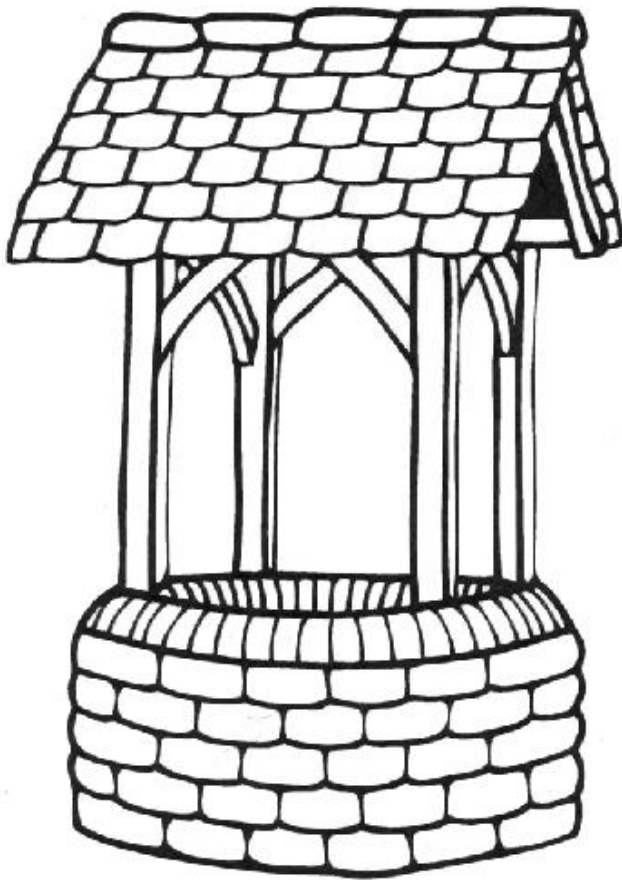
- At the beginning of the novel, Ailis steals bacon from Miss Franny's kitchen. Who does she give it to? Why does she feel compelled to do such a thing?
- Irish-American Sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan said, *"I don't think there's any point being Irish if you don't know that the world is going to break your heart eventually."* What did he mean? Have some cultures had a more difficult history than others? What do you know about your heritage and the struggles your ancestors endured in order to pave the way for you?
- Nettie has a pet chicken named Kristina. Are there rules on which pets are most loveable? What would be your perfect pet – and why is it perfect for you? Have you ever loved a pet as deeply as Nettie loves Kristina?
- At times Quinn seems angry with Ailis and, at other times, he seems more understanding. Why are his emotions so mixed up? Is he truly angry? If so, what about?
- Sam says Miss Franny is "splintered." What do you think that means? What in her history would make him say that? Do we have a choice about how we respond to hard times? Is there ever a trial so great as to make us unable to be kind and move forward with our lives? What or who determines our reaction? Compare and contrast Miss Franny's and Ailis' response to significant hardship in their lives.
- Quinn tells Ailis, "Good times don't always have to bring laughter." (pg. 219) What does he mean? Can you think of any quiet good times you've had? Would you be willing to share them with the class?
- On page 230, Ida says, "We are a hodge podge of people, but we love you very much. Isn't that what makes a family after all?" Can you ever feel as if people or friends you are not technically related to are also family? What qualities determine a family?
- Recount the various birds mentioned in the novel. What theme is the author illustrating through those birds?
- How do the Chicago newspapers (media) hurt people in the novel? How do they help? What are your thoughts about the negative and positive impacts of media on our society today? Do you think everything reported in the media is true?

Activities

- **Adopt a chicken!** Nettie finds great solace in her friendship with the hen, Kristina. If you choose *Cinnamon Moon* as a class novel – or even as a read aloud teacher’s choice – Tess Hilmo will provide a 4” Schleich (or similar) toy hen as a classroom gift. Pass the chicken around as the students read. Or place the chicken on a student’s desk before school starts. Whoever has the chicken must do a friendly act of service for a fellow student and then secretly place the chicken on another desk. Service options might include: picking up trash around that student’s desk, offering a sincere compliment, giving up their turn or place in line for that student, writing a kind note, talking to them at recess, etc. Simply email the author at tess@tesshilmo.com to request your classroom chicken. Please allow 2 weeks for order and delivery.
- **Get silly:** Write questions in marker on a beach ball (choose from any of the discussion questions or select your own). Toss the ball around the classroom. When a student catches the ball, have them select and answer a question. Leave time for discussion between tosses.
- **Treasure words:** Complete the Word Well (attached) as you read *Cinnamon Moon*.
- **Truly consider dialogue:** One function of dialogue is to illuminate characters. As you read, highlight a quote from each chapter that strikes you as interesting or important. Once the novel is complete, have each student choose their favorite “overall” quote and write it down on the [Dialogue Lantern Worksheet](#) page of this Guide. Have students write a paragraph on why they chose the quote they did and how it is meaningful to them.
- **Bell Ringer:** Once you’ve read enough of the novel to know Nettie disappears, have the students complete the maze worksheet included in this guide.
- **Student Advice Booth:** Almost every character in this novel is facing their own, individual trial. Make a simple “Advice Booth” sign. Pass it around the classroom and have each student offer one piece of advice to a character. You can choose a specific character to focus the activity on, or have the students select one themselves. If you want to get fancy, make a slightly larger sign and put it on a classroom wall with two chairs below it (creating an “advice booth” space). Have two students at a time sit in the chairs and offer advice to the characters on what they should do at various points in the novel.

Word Well Activity

Words matter! One of the best ways to improve our writing is to pay attention to words. Think about them. Collect them. Study both their denotations and connotations. As you read *Cinnamon Moon*, use this sheet to write down words that strike you as funny, interesting, meaningful or new. Any words that speak to you personally – for any reason at all – are perfect for this activity.



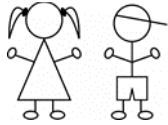
Dialogue Lantern

A very important function of dialogue in any novel is to illuminate the characters. What does a character say that offers insight into who they really are? Is dialogue always saying only what it appears to be saying or can there be more meaning within those exchanges? Use the space below to write down passages of dialogue from *Cinnamon Moon* that give insight into the hearts and minds of the various characters.

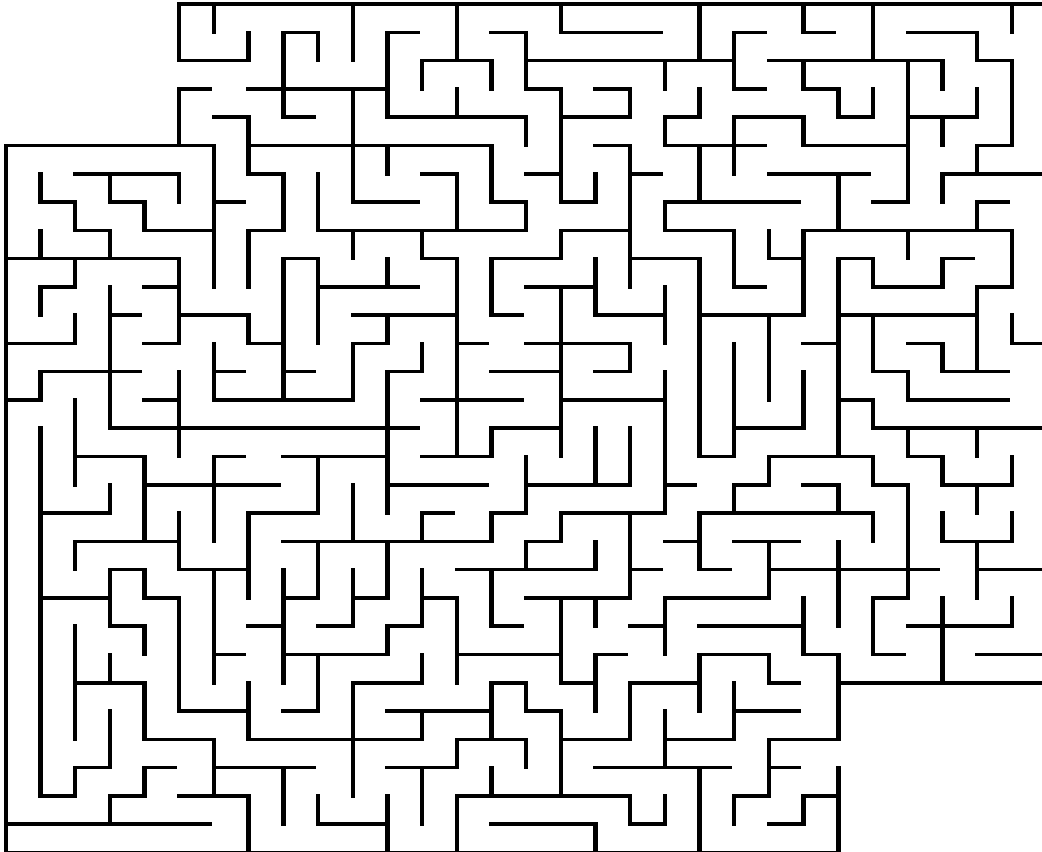


Cinnamon Moon Bell Ringer

Help Ailis and Quinn Find Nettie...



Ailis and Quinn



.....Nettie