



The Bellwoods Game by Celia Krampien

Reading Guide by OwlCrate Jr. Published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers

Perfect for fans of *Small Spaces* and *Doll Bones*, this spooky, highly illustrated middle grade novel follows a girl who hopes to fix her outcast status through a game in the haunted woods, only to discover that some legends shouldn't be played with.



"Stay together and stick to the paths if you can. Don't trust what you see..."

Everyone knows Fall Hollow is haunted. It has been ever since Abigail Snook went into the woods many years ago, never to be seen again. Since then, it's tradition for the sixth graders at Beckett Elementary to play the Bellwoods Game on Halloween night. Three kids are chosen to go into the woods. Whoever rings the bell there wins the game and saves the town for another year, but if Abigail's ghost captures the players first, the spirit is let loose to wreak havoc on Fall Hollow—or so the story goes.

Now that it's Bailee's year to play, she can finally find out what really happens. And legend has it the game's winner gets a wish. Maybe, just maybe, if Bailee wins, she can go back to the way things used to be before her grandma got sick and everyone at school started hating her. But when the night begins, everything the kids thought they knew about the game—and each other—is challenged. One thing's for sure: something sinister is at play...waiting for them all in the woods.

Key Characters:

- Carmen Alvarez
- Margery Danes (Abigail's bully)
- Noah Davies (new kid, aspiring journalist)
- Bailee Heron
- Arlo Jackson (last year's winner)
- Madison Lam (Keeper of the Game)
- Fenwick "Fen" Leer (friend since kindergarten but something has changed recently)
- Gabby Millman (friend competition)
- Nan
- Abigail Snook
- The Specter

Setting:

- The Bellwoods, Fall Hollow, North America
- Halloween, 1982/Current day



The Bellwoods Game by Celia Krampien Reflection Questions



Stories reveal truths.”

Storytelling plays an important role in this story. Bailee writes her own stories and collects other people's accounts about the Bellwoods in her journal, and Noah is an aspiring journalist trying to start a school newspaper. How do you communicate stories?

“Each player must bring one item into the Bellwoods.. Should the player be caught by the ghost of Abigail Snook, sacrificing their gift is said to ensure them safe passage out of the woods.”

The ghost requires a gift that is personal to the player in order to give them protection. What would your gift be and why?

This book deals with some tricky friend situations. Fen is angry because he thinks Bailee got him in trouble with a teacher for taking on a dangerous dare, and now Bailee is getting the cold shoulder from a group of classmates. Can you think of a time you've had a misunderstanding with a friend? How did you work it out?

This book has some seriously spooky moments! How do you feel about reading scary stories? What do you like or not like about them? Do you think the illustrations made this story more creepy or less creepy?

The Bellwoods Game is a ghost story that includes topics like friendship, bullying, memories, the power of stories, and more. Can you draw connections between this book and three others? Write down the title, author, year of publication, and at least one element that connects the stories.

Reflection time! How was the story different than you may have expected when you started chapter one? Did you predict any plot points? What questions would you ask the author if you had the chance? Write a short review of this book that you could share with a friend or classmate who hasn't read the book yet.



The Bellwoods Game by Celia Krampien

Beyond The Book Extension Activities



Choose a quote from the book and free write for 10 minutes about whatever it brings to mind. Not sure where to start? Pick from one of these:

- ***“I think stories have a way of revealing truths even if they’re not true stories. Maybe people really did see strange sights in the Bellwoods. Or maybe the tales were just a way to express fear and anxiety at the time, a way to make sense of all the unfortunate stuff that was happening.” - Nan***
-
- ***““Are you here to play my game?” came a voice”***
-
- ***“The Specter has very few weaknesses; it’s always learning and changing. But it hates the light.”***
-
- ***“Stay together and stick to the paths if you can. Don’t trust what you see..”***

Draw a map of the Bellwoods: Bailee and her fellow players have to make their way through the maze-like woods to get to the bell in order to win the Specter’s game. Using references from the story, draw a map of their journey.

Write your own ghost story like Bailee, or take a page from Noah’s notebook and research a local legend from your area!