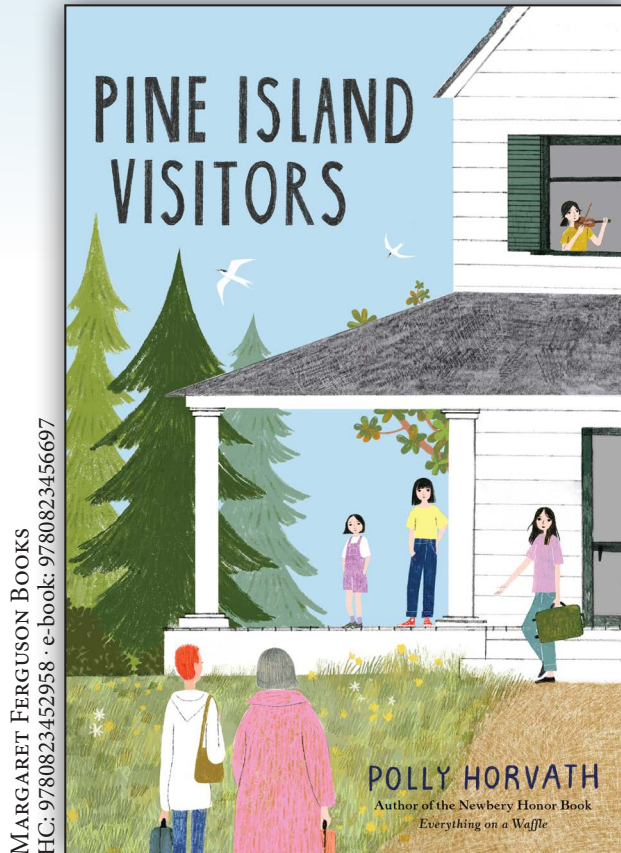


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Pine Island Visitors

by **Polly Horvath**

ABOUT THE BOOK

From Newbery Honor author Polly Horvath comes a sequel to her popular *Pine Island Home* about orphaned sisters who find a way to make a new family.

Fiona, Marlin, Natasha, and Charlie McCready have been adopted by their unlikely guardian, Al, and finally settled into their new home on Pine Island in British Columbia. It's been an

adjustment, but they are loving being with each other and having Al next door. Then they receive a letter from Mrs. Weatherspoon, who took care of them after their parents died. She is coming to visit for three months—an inordinate amount of time for a houseguest! Accommodating a fifth person in the tiny house is hard enough, but to their horror, Mrs. Weatherspoon arrives with a companion: her childhood friend, Jo. Jo has opinions about everything—what they should eat, how they should behave—and she doesn't hesitate to express them. And sweet Mrs. Weatherspoon seems to have fallen under her spell. When she and Jo announce that they are going to extend their stay even longer, Fiona and Marlin are beside themselves. Fiona hates rocking the boat, but there must be a way to get rid of these grown-up bullies so she and her sisters can have the life they wish to lead.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the title of the book suggest a possible conflict? At what point in the novel is the conflict revealed?
- How do the girls react to the news that Mrs. Weatherspoon is coming for a visit? Why doesn't Al want her to come? Discuss why Fiona insists that they should welcome Mrs. Weatherspoon. How are they surprised when Mrs. Weatherspoon brings a friend? Fiona says that Mrs. Weatherspoon is “always picking up strays” (p. 75). In what ways is Jo Menzies a stray? How are the visitors an imposition to the McCreadys and Al?

- Name one word that best describes Jo. Why does Mrs. Weatherspoon allow Jo to take over the McCready house? How does each girl respond to Jo? Define interloper. Why does Fiona call Jo an interloper? Charlie wants to call the visitors Mom and Aunt Jo. Explain Fiona's objection.
- There are only two bedrooms at the McCready house, and the girls must come up with a sleeping arrangement for Mrs. Weatherspoon and Jo. What is Al's solution to the sleeping dilemma? Explain what he means by "You never want to make your guest too comfortable" (p. 71).
- The McCready sisters are in school and have settled in at home with Al Farber as their guardian. The girls have some problems adjusting to school. Debate whether their previously remote life contributes to these issues. Natasha has looked forward to joining the strings class at school. Why does she drop out once everyone knows how good she is? How does Al respond to her wish?
- Describe Mr. Byrne, Fiona's English teacher. How does he encourage Fiona to express herself in writing? Why is she hesitant to reveal what she is thinking and feeling? At what point does she get comfortable recording her true thoughts in her journal? What does she learn about herself? Mr. Byrne leaves to take care of his ailing father. How does his departure affect Fiona?
- Marlin has an encounter with Georgia, a mean girl in her class. How does Georgia influence the other girls? Why doesn't Mrs. Dennison see through the mean girls? Mrs. Dennison blames Marlin for not adjusting. Discuss what happens when Jo attends a conference with Marlin and Mrs. Dennison. What is Al's solution to Marlin's problem with her classmates? Explain what he means by "Marlin, there's always going to be a Jo, a Georgia, and a Mrs. Dennison" (p. 137). Mrs. Dennison thinks she can help Marlin by offering her the opportunity to write a cooking column for the school newspaper. Why does Marlin turn down the offer?
- Fiona worries that being around Jo is turning her into Jo. In what ways does she think she is like Jo? What does she do to correct this behavior? At what point does Al have enough of the visitors? How does he finally get rid of them?
- How has the relationship between the girls and Al grown since they first met? Cite passages from the novel that show he is becoming a father to them. Describe the Christmas gifts that Al gives to each girl. How do they reveal how much he really knows and cares for them? Describe his reaction to their gift to him. Debate whether Christmas is a turning point in their relationship and in the novel.
- What is the central theme of the novel?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Polly Horvath is the author of *Pine Island Visitors*, *Pine Island Home*, and *Very Rich*, an "entertaining confection" (*The Horn Book*) that "touches on thankfulness and the importance of self-acceptance" (*Publishers Weekly*). She has written many books for children including *Everything on a Waffle*, a Newbery Honor Book; *The Canning Season*, a National Book Award winner; and *The Trolls*, a National Book Award Finalist. She lives in British Columbia with her family. Visit her at PollyHorvath.com.