

Teaching Guide for *Eleanor, Alice, & the Roosevelt Ghosts* by Dianne K. Salerni

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5

Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of lasting impression did Eleanor's deceased mother leave on Eleanor's self-image? Provide quotes from the book to back your answers.
2. Why does Alice believe herself to be "an extra appendage on a family that is sufficient without her?" Do you think she is right? Back up your answer with examples from the text.
3. Eleanor and Alice both suffer from a real or perceived lack of parental love, but the resulting insecurity produces very different personalities. How does insecurity affect each girl's actions, thoughts, and self-esteem?

4. These girls begin the book with strong opinions of each other. What does Eleanor think of Alice and what does Alice think of Eleanor? Provide quotes from the book.
5. How do the alternating points of view give us a dual perspective of each girl? (For example, does Alice's opinion of Eleanor match what Eleanor thinks of herself?) Provide quotes from the book.
6. What do you think is the single most important thing Eleanor learns from Alice? What's the most important thing Alice learns from Eleanor? How are they stronger together than apart? Back up your answer with examples from the text.
7. Why do you think Grandmother Hall repeatedly calls Eleanor "a burden" but tries to keep her away from other relatives who wish to be a part of her life? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
8. Was Alice's father right or wrong to hide the truth about the deaths of her mother and grandmother and the ghost in the house? Explain your answer.
9. Which character in the book is most like you? Why? Which one do you admire the most? Explain.
10. How does the author incorporate ghosts into the setting and plot so that they seem a normal part of life? Provide examples from the text.
11. What do we learn about this alternate history from the newspaper articles, advertisements, and tables located between the chapters?
12. Alice's encounter with her mother's Vengeful ghost was devastating to her and impacted the way she felt about her deceased mother. Do you think it would be not as terrible if a family member returned as a Friendly or Unaware?
13. Why do you think the characters use the pronoun "it" for ghosts instead of the "he" and "she" that apply to the ghosts' progenitors? What do you think it means in Chapter 27 when Alice's father struggles over whether to use "she" or "it" when referring to his wife's ghost?
14. The ghost of Davy Drummond attacks his victims emotionally instead of physically—at least at first. What torments did he choose to apply to each character? Why do you think he chose those particular things?
15. If ghosts were real, and you could be sure to have one that was harmless, would you wish for one in your house? Why or why not?
16. The end of the nineteenth century was a time of rapidly changing technology, which can be seen in the differences between the houses of Grandmother Hall and Aunt Bye. (Electricity vs. gas; indoor plumbing vs. privies and chamber pots.) How does this

compare to the changes in technology when the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first? What types of people seem most resistant to change?

17. Discuss the importance (or lack of importance) of formal education in the 1890s. Note that Franklin and Helen attend school and were on winter break during this story. However Alice and Eleanor do not attend school, although neither one of them is uneducated. Meanwhile, the servant girls in Aunt Bye's house, Maisie and Ida, work instead of attending school, and even the grocer's daughter, Pearl, is helping her father make deliveries instead of being at school in the middle of an afternoon. In this time period, how was it determined who received schooling and for how long?

ACTIVITIES:

1. **Compare and Contrast** – Use the Venn Diagram activity sheet to compare character traits of Eleanor and Alice. Select 2-3 traits and ask students to provide textual support for their choice.
2. **Point of View** – Use the Point of View activity sheet to differentiate between first person and third person.
3. **Character Analysis** – Use the *Who Said It?* activity sheet to sort real life quotations between Eleanor and Alice, using what students know about the two girls' personalities.
4. **Creative Writing** – Have students select a commonly known fairy tale or nursery rhyme and alter it to include a Friendly, Unaware, or Vengeful ghost.

Example:

Jack be nimble.
Jack be quick.
Jack fights Vengefuls with an iron candlestick.

5. **Research** – Have students choose a historical figure from the book and research them in order to produce Two Truths and a Lie with which to challenge their classmates.

Example:

- A. Theodore Roosevelt was elected to the Presidency in 1901.
- B. Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest man to ever become U.S. President.
- C. Theodore Roosevelt was shot in the chest during a speech and finished the speech before going to the hospital.

The lie is A. Roosevelt became President in 1901 not through election, but because of the assassination of President William McKinley. Roosevelt was Vice President at the time.

Name _____

POINT OF VIEW

In the book, one of the girl's narratives is told from a first person point of view, while the other girl's narrative is told in third person. Can you identify which is which? For the passages below, identify whether they are written in first person or third person.

1. This is exactly what I expected from Alice. I should have known that spending one night at my house wouldn't change anything between us. _____
2. There's only one thing about Eleanor that is truly notable—and that's her hair. Glossy and thick and the color of golden wheat, it hangs past her waist. Alice would steal it if she could. _____
3. Alice smiles blandly and doesn't commit one way or the other to time spent with "calming Eleanor." _____
4. Why does Alice think she can submit orders to me as if I were her maid? As if she were a *captain* in the army, and I a lowly private. _____
5. Her legs have gone stiff with cold, and her teeth are beginning to chatter. She hasn't been in the attic long enough for the temperature to drop as much as it has. That *thing* is to blame, turning her into an icicle with its unnatural coldness. _____
6. Eleanor's clear blue eyes fix worriedly on Alice's face. It occurs to Alice that her cousin might read her far better than Alice can read Eleanor. _____
7. Slamming the door behind me, I rage silently at my mother for leaving my father all those years ago and bringing us here to live. _____
8. I don't dare look in Alice's direction. *Once*, a long time ago, I told her I thought Franklin was the handsomest of the Roosevelt boys, and Alice assumes that means my affection for him is more than cousinly. _____

BONUS:

"A snake in the attic," Alice continues. "A rat in the dining room. I bet you liked scaring your sisters." She glances at the list. "Susannah and Mary Isabel. Did you play tricks on them? I once put a toad on my sister's pillow. And my brother got blamed for it, which I consider killing two birds with one stone. Don't you?"

POINT OF VIEW

ANSWER KEY

1. First
2. Third
3. Third
4. First
5. Third
6. Third
7. First
8. First

BONUS: Third – Explain to students that even though Alice uses the words “I” and “my” during her lines of dialogue, the passage is in third person. Point out the phrases “Alice continues” and “She glances at the list.” It can be tricky to identify point of view when dialogue is involved. Remind students to look at the *non*-dialogue sentences to make their determination.

Name _____

WHO SAID IT?

The following are famous statements by the real Eleanor and Alice Roosevelt. Can you identify who said what? Write E or A beside each quotation.

1. I valued my independence from an early age and was always something of an individualist ... Well, a show-off anyway. _____
2. You must do the things you think you cannot do. _____
3. Justice cannot be for one side alone, but must be for both. _____
4. No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. _____
5. My father always wanted to be the corpse at every funeral, the bride at every wedding and the baby at every christening. _____
6. If you haven't got anything nice to say about anybody, come sit next to me. _____
7. The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. _____
8. To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart. _____
9. It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness. _____
10. I have a simple philosophy: Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. Scratch where it itches. _____
11. You can often change your circumstances by changing your attitude. _____
12. I've always believed in the adage that the secret of eternal youth is arrested development. _____
13. My specialty is detached malevolence. _____

BONUS: Choose your favorite quotation and explain it in your own words.

DOUBLE BONUS: Overall, what difference do you see between Eleanor's quotes and Alice's?

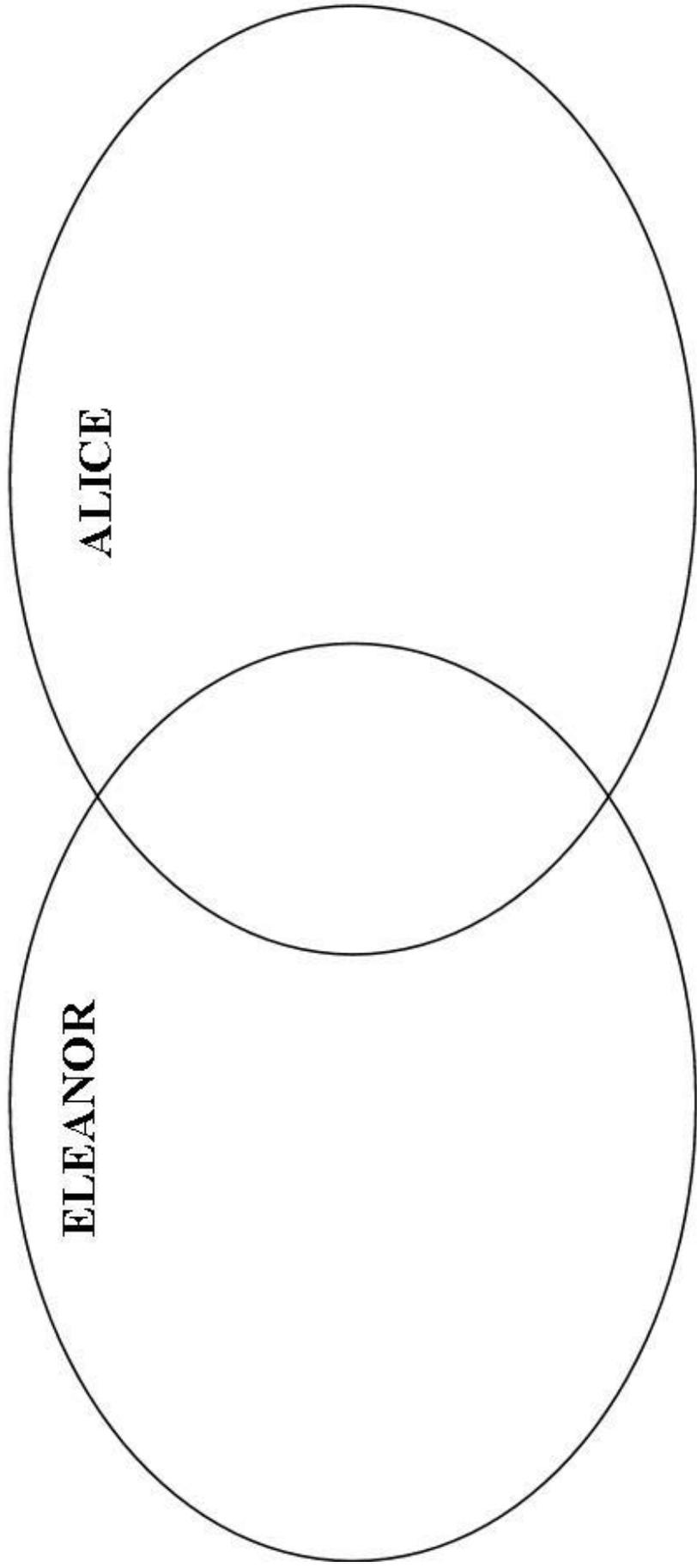
WHO SAID IT?

ANSWER KEY

1. Alice
2. Eleanor
3. Eleanor
4. Eleanor
5. Alice
6. Alice
7. Eleanor
8. Eleanor
9. Eleanor
10. Alice
11. Eleanor
12. Alice
13. Alice

DOUBLE BONUS: Alice's quotes tend to be witty, sarcastic, and often about herself, while Eleanor's quotes are generally uplifting and advice on how to live one's life to the fullest.

Place the characteristics in the Venn Diagram. Be prepared to provide examples to support your decision.



- Impulsive
- Analytical
- Insecure
- Awkward
- Nurturing
- Bold
- Starved for Affection
- Motherless
- Loyal
- Responsible
- Shy
- Inhibited
- Reckless
- Lonely
- Brave
- Stubborn
- Adventurous
- Fashionable