



Cabin Girl

Kristin Butcher

Reading level: 3.1

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AR Quiz #165823

Book Summary

Sixteen-year-old Bailey is working at her first summer job as a cabin girl at a fly-in fishing camp at Witch Lake. She struggles with the job at first but enjoys hearing the stories of the area, including the legend of a local ghost. April, an older waitress with street smarts, takes Bailey under her wing and the two girls become friends. It's all good until another waitress burns her arm and has to leave. Bailey gets a sudden promotion, and April is asked to help clean the cabins. April becomes far from friendly and Bailey finds herself alone again and messing up on the job—and possibly seeing the ghost.

Author Biography

Kristin Butcher taught a variety of different subjects from primary school to high school before becoming an author. She credits her experience in the classroom with helping her understand children and teens better and making her a whiz at Trivial Pursuit. Kristin has always had a wild imagination and can't imagine that she'll ever run out of ideas for stories. Kristin lives in Campbell River, British Columbia.

Connecting to the Text

Character Study

To engage students with the characters Bailey and April in *Cabin Girl*, use the following for discussion topics, asking students to respond in a group or through individual writing. Emphasize the characters' history, motivations and development. Does each change and grow as the novel progresses?

1. At first, the routine and pressures of camp life at Witch Lake Lodge are difficult for Bailey. In chapter 2 she throws her alarm clock across the room and hides under her pillow rather than get out of bed. She's clumsy, messes up a lot, and even a three-minute walk leaves her exhausted. But by chapter 5, Bailey says, "I feel like I could run a marathon."

Bailey's work is sabotaged by April, but Bailey doesn't see it at first, doubting her own perceptions: "It's bad enough that I'm screwing up, but I don't even realize I'm doing it" (ch. 8). Later, she figures out what has happened and "[gives] April a taste of her own medicine" (ch. 10).

- ◆ Through the novel, how does Bailey change, physically and mentally? Does she gain confidence and strength? Consider how she speaks to April in chapter 11.
 - ◆ When Bailey gets home, do you think things will be different for her? Will she still need her parents' approval for everything she does? How might she influence this?
2. April has been on her own since she was fourteen and that has made her smart, tough and independent. She resents Bailey, calling her "spoiled" and a "little princess" (ch. 9) and treats her badly throughout the novel, sabotaging her work and playing a nasty trick on her. She also resents that Gabe is Bailey's godfather.
 - ◆ Does April's behavior toward Bailey change throughout the novel? Is there a point where she really is Bailey's friend?
 - ◆ Do you feel sorry for April? Life hasn't been easy for her and because of that she has learned to play by her own rules.
 - ◆ At the end of the novel, we learn April has committed fraud against an insurance company. Do you think April learned her lesson? What do think is next for her?

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. Ask students to imagine that they are newspaper reporters who must write an article about what happened to April. Students can assume they've interviewed Bailey, Dennis Savoy and Gabe. Articles should refer to and use direct quotations from *Cabin Girl*. Ask students to share their articles in a large group discussion.

Option: Ask students to conduct their interviews in a skit using a talk show or live newscast format. Roles could be the interviewer, Dennis Savoy, Bailey and April.
2. Bailey wants more independence from her parents and at first admires April's freedom. In chapter 3, Bailey says, "I want to run my own life—like you do. No

one tells you what to do. You can do anything you want.” By chapter 12, Bailey’s attitude has changed: “I thought April had her life totally together...I wanted to be like her. Now I’m grateful I’m not.” Invite students to write a journal entry, letter home or diary entry pretending they are Bailey, describing what changed her mind.

Vocabulary Enrichment

The following words are used in *Cabin Girl* to describe the legend of the ghost at Witch Lake.

bad luck	ghost	necklace	spooky
chanting	lake	scared	trance
doomed	magical	shaman	witch
full moon	mysterious	spirits	

Challenge students to write paragraphs about the legend, incorporating vocabulary words into their responses. Ideas, to get students started, are below.

- You are one of the guides taking guests out on the lake to fish in the wee hours of the morning before the sun rises. How will you share the legend? Assume that the better the story, the better the tips for you!
- You’re a camp boy and you saw the ghost as Bailey did in chapter 7. You’re sitting around a campfire with your friends and they want to hear what happened. Since you have your guitar, you break into song...
- Imagine there are 5 beads on the ghost’s necklace: one each for *bad luck*, *full moon*, *lake*, *shaman* and *spirits*. Can you make alliterative sentences for each bead? For example, *Bailey’s bad luck bode badly and her bunkmate was bonkers. She was shaking and scared silly by the spooky spirit!*

Social Studies

Bailey is superstitious. In chapter 1, she picks up a penny for good luck. Later, she avoids a black dog (ch. 2), throws spilt salt over her shoulder (ch. 6), and is alarmed when April breaks a mirror (ch. 3). Use the following topics for individual or small group exercises.

- Spilling salt and breaking a mirror are considered bad luck. Imagine the origins of these superstitions. Brainstorm ideas about what could make people think that spilling salt or breaking a mirror would bring about negative experiences. Then research their origins online or in your school’s library. Were your guesses right?
- Consider the power of suggestion, where the idea of something brings about a change in behavior. For example, telling someone that when they pick up a penny they’ll have good luck could make that person have a brighter outlook or attitude, which affects how they experience things, making them believe they’re lucky. Bailey seemed to have a lot of bad luck and “messed up” at camp often. Could the power of suggestion be playing a role for Bailey?

- Do you have any superstitions in your family, school, sports teams or community? Are they about good luck or bad luck? Are they unique or are they widely shared? Can you imagine their origins?

Art

1. As art projects, invite students to recreate one of the settings or scenes from *Cabin Girl*, choosing from the list below or another of their choice. What color palette, textures and media would suit each scene?

Option: You may wish to discuss the literary conventions of metaphor and simile.

- ◆ Kristin Butcher uses powerful imagery to describe Northern Manitoba and Witch Lake. In chapter 1, as Bailey flies on a Beaver float plane, she sees “Mother Nature’s crazy quilt of sun-soaked lakes stitched with forest.” Capture the image of nature’s crazy quilt.
 - ◆ The deck of the lodge is “dotted with yellow umbrellas [stretching] its entire length. It looks like a giant flower box” (ch. 1). What colors and textures would best illustrate the umbrellas and wooden deck?
 - ◆ April’s motorcycle accident left her with a “scar zigzagging down her cheek and neck...like white lightning” against her tanned skin (ch. 1). Knowing what you know about April, can you capture her mean spirit in a portrait?
 - ◆ After stocking the portable pantries for the shore lunch, Bailey appears to have the camp and the moon to herself: “At one spot, the path opens to a clearing by the lake, and there it is—a huge white orb hung so low in the sky, it seems to sit on the water like an enormous pearl in a sea of diamonds” (ch. 7). Find the media that appeal to you to illustrate the moon’s reflection on the lake.
2. In chapter 2, Bailey learns the legend of Witch Lake. Ed tells her the story of a fur trader, his wife, and his daughter, a Cree woman who turns into a giant black bear and then bursts into flames, only to return on full moons to seek her magical necklace. Invite students to retell this story by creating a sequence of powerful images or scenes—without using letters or words—on postcard-sized paper. Encourage students to try different textures and colors for each scene. For example, the first image could be of the peaceful cabin on the lake, with the mother and daughter inside and the fur trader leaving; and the second could be of the three woodsmen taking the cabin by force.

To debrief this exercise, ask: How did you decide which images to include in your image/scene sequence? What media and colors felt right to illustrate each, and why?

You may wish to divide the class into two or three groups and ask each to create their image sequences separately. Once finished, mix up the images for each group and ask the other groups to put them in order. For fun, invite teachers or other students to sort the images for each. Could they arrange them into a story?

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. In chapter 4, Bailey describes the summer jobs at Witch Lake Lodge, a fly-in fishing lodge which is open from mid-May to mid-September each year. Comprised mostly of students, there are guides, a cook, kitchen girl, waitresses, a laundry lady, and a camp boy and cabin girl. Ask students to consider each of these roles. What job would suit you best, and why? What are the perks and challenges for each? If you were interested in finding a job working at a lodge, how could you find out more?
2. Students interested in stories from the Orca Currents series with summer jobs or students working will want to read:
 - ◆ *Dog Walker* by Karen Spafford-Fitz: Turk finds a way to impress dog-loving Carly. He starts a dog-walking business, even though he doesn't care about dogs as much as he cares about cash.
 - ◆ *Fast Slide* by Melanie Jackson: Clay has a summer job at Safari Splash, the new water park in town. It seems pretty boring to him until someone starts wandering about in a lynx costume and forty thousand dollars goes missing from the till.
 - ◆ *Finding Elmo* by Monique Polak: Tim has a great time working at his dad's pet store, but things change when his father rents out the store's black cockatoo, Elmo.
 - ◆ *Hold the Pickles* by Vicki Grant: Dan gets a job as a product mascot wearing a hotdog costume and handing out free samples. Dan isn't crazy about the job but things really go crazy when a girl's interest in his mascot persona is too good to be true.
 - ◆ *Junkyard Dog* by Monique Polak: Justin has high hopes for his job with working dogs, but he worries when someone in the company is involved in a series of thefts.