DEWITCHING

By Alex Flinn

Teaching Guide

About the Book

Kendra Hilferty, the witch who cast a spell on Kyle Kingsbury in *Beastly*, is back in a fairy-tale mash-up about her immortal existence—how she discovered she was a witch and the various ways she has used her powers to help people throughout the centuries (unfortunately, her attempts have often backfired!). As it turns out, Kendra has actually had a hand in *Hansel and Gretel, The Princess and the Pea*, and *The Little Mermaid*—but these are not the fairy tales you think you know! Kendra's reminiscences are wrapped around a modern-day version of *Cinderella*, except the "ugly" stepsister is not who you think she is!



Discussion Questions

- 1. Using evidence from the stories, identify *Bewitching*'s main themes. Why are these themes important to the characters? Why might reading stories with these themes appeal to people?
- **2.** Define foreshadowing, and then find an example of foreshadowing in the story. How does the example contribute to the story's plot or to the characters' development?
- **3.** In what ways does Emma initially misjudge Lisette's actions? If you were Emma, would you have made the same mistakes? Why or why not?
- **4.** On page 76, Emma says of popularity: "Popularity was like a kind of science, but unlike my school subjects, I couldn't learn it." What does she mean by this? Do you feel similarly? Why or why not?
- 5. How would you characterize Kendra's intentions and her interpretations of events? Is she someone who thoroughly understands situations and her role in them? Why or why not? Find passages in the book that support your answer.
- **6.** Which mothers in literature does Emma's mother most resemble? Use examples to explain. How do these mothers resemble or represent mothers you know?

- 7. Emma's ex-friend Courtney says of Emma's stepfather: "I always thought he was your real dad" (p. 81). Is Emma's stepfather her "real dad"? Why or why not?
- **8.** On page 88, one of the answers to a *Jeopardy* question is "cuckoo." How is the cuckoo a symbol that represents characters or events in this story? Provide reasons for your answer.
- **9.** Identify the references to other stories in *Bewitching*, the fairy tales as well as other literature such as *Emma* and *Vanity Fair*. How does *Bewitching*'s story relate to or provide a twist on those older stories?
- **10.** Discuss the various kinds of love in *Bewitching*: between friends, between sisters, between parents and children, and between romantic partners. Using examples, describe what Emma wants and expects from each kind of love.
- **11.** How does Kendra involve herself in all the stories that comprise *Bewitching*? Is she primarily a positive character or not? Why? Provide reasons for your answer.
- **12.** Many of the fairy tales incorporated into this novel are extremely old. What do you think inspires authors to retell old stories? Why do fairy tales still interest people today?

BEUITGHIG

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Extension Activities

- **1. A Fresh Perspective.** Select a fairy tale and develop a character who isn't the protagonist in the fairy tale—such as a stepsister, the prince (rather than the princess), or the witch. Retell the fairy tale from that character's perspective to create a new spin on an old tale.
- 2. Flinn vs. Tradition. Choose one of the fairy tales Alex Flinn has incorporated into *Bewitching*. Read older versions of this tale at the Sur La Lune fairy tale website mentioned in the "Historical Notes" section. Write a compare-and-contrast essay analyzing how Alex Flinn's version is similar to and different from the older version of the tale. Include a "Flinn vs. Tradition" section explaining which version you like best and why.
- **3. Animal Planet?** On pages 169-170, Emma describes why she thinks the school parking lot is like *Animal Planet*. Consider your own school or some other social environment you know well, like a workplace, a nonprofit where you volunteer,

- or a coffee shop you visit. Using specific examples to substantiate your argument, write a persuasive essay on how this social environment is like *Animal Planet*.
- **4. History in Context.** Choose one of the historical locations or events Alex Flinn uses for a setting in *Bewitching*. Research essential information about your chosen topic, such as dates, people involved, statistics, characteristics of the region and era, major incidents, and results of these incidents. Use your facts, along with artwork and music, to create a multimedia presentation.
- 5. **Blog It.** Read a number of fairy tales in various classic and contemporary collections. Write blog entries for your favorites that include summaries and in-depth analyses of the stories' themes and symbols. Be sure to also include evaluations of the stories—your opinions on who should read them and why. Create your Fairy Tale Blog and post your reviews.



About the Author

Alex Flinn loves fairy tales and is also the author of *New York Times* bestselling Beastly, a modern retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* that is now a feature film starring Vanessa Hudgens. Her other fairy-tale retellings are *A Kiss in Time*, an edgy twist on *Sleeping Beauty*; and *Cloaked*, a modern mash-up of *The Frog Prince*, *The Shoemaker and the Elves*, and more. Her other books include *Breathing Underwater*, an American Library Association Top 10 Best Book for Young Adults; *Breaking Point*; *Nothing to Lose*; *Fade to Black*; and *Diva*. Alex lives in Palmetto Bay, Florida. You can visit her on the web at www.alexflinn.com.

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