



*'Year of the Sister'*

## **Well-Read Mom Family Supplement**

*Well-Read Mom's Guide to Bringing the Great Books into Your Home*

### **November: Choosing What's Right, Even When It's Hard**

Discuss along with *Antigone* by Sophocles

How do I decide what to do when either option will cause me discomfort or suffering? How do I remain faithful to what is good when I will suffer for it? Is it better to suffer injustice than to commit it? The questions proposed to us through *Antigone* are fundamental to our human moral formation and action. They have been asked in every era, from ancient Greece to Puritan New England. And even a child wonders, "What must I do?"

#### ***The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare**

Katherine sails from Barbados to Puritan Connecticut to live with her Aunt Rachel, Uncle Matthew, and cousins Mercy and Judith. Having been raised by her grandfather amid wealth, Kit is unprepared for the stark, hardworking, and religiously-motivated life of the New Englanders she joins. Kit is suspected of being a witch when she jumps into the chilly river and does not drown. Kit befriends and receives comfort and advice from an ostracized Quakeress, Hannah Tupper, who is also considered a witch. Prudence Cruff, a maltreated child, is nurtured and taught to read at Hannah's by Kit. When a fever sickens many children and kills several, the townsfolk seek to pin the blame on Hannah Tupper's "witchcraft." Kit reaches Hannah in time to save her, though her house is burned. Kit becomes a scapegoat, being brought to trial as "the witch's apprentice" based on certain objects found at the Tupper house. Prudence is brought by Nathaniel (Nat) Eaton to testify. Her testimony opens her father's eyes to the fact that his wife has deceived him with hateful nonsense regarding Kit. Just as Kit has given help to surprising characters, she receives help from unexpected characters. She is exonerated through the courage of Nat, Prudence, Prudence's father, Kit's cold uncle, and the wisdom of the town minister.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What situation makes you sympathetic to Kit? Is there anything that tempts you to dislike her?
2. What about Hannah causes Kit to attach herself to her? Why is Kit devoted to Mercy?
3. Kit has the children act out the parable of the Good Samaritan. Do you wonder why the author chose *this* parable?
4. Is there a character trait that Nat and Kit share? How are they alike?
5. Who demonstrates courage in the face of evil?
6. What is going on when Kit refuses to tell the court why Prudence's name is written in her copy book? What is Kit risking? What do you think you would do?



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### **More for older readers:**

- *The Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *The Bicycle Spy* by Yona Zeldis McDonough

### **For Younger Readers**

#### ***Brave Young Knight* by Karen Kingsbury**

The young knight of the west village is fast, strong, and intelligent, but also kind. When the king announces that the bravest knight will be named prince, each village (north, south, east, west) hopes their knight will be chosen. The young knight of the west village hears that the other knights exceed him in speed, strength, and wits, so he redoubles his efforts to acquire what he lacks. As he trains, his father reminds him to rely on God as the source of these gifts. When the four knights are tested by the king, the knights of the east, south, and north villages all cheat. The knight of the west village comes in last in each contest. However, the king commends the young knight from the west village as the bravest for resisting the opportunities to win through dishonesty. The knight from the west village is named prince of the kingdom.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. The brave young knight is fast, strong, and intelligent. We notice he is also competitive. What does he do when he hears about the talents of the other knights?
2. The young knight says, "I'm trying, but I'm not sure if I'm the fastest/strongest/smarest." He worries that he is not "enough." Do you ever think about this?
3. When the young knight from the west village worries that his talents are not enough, to whom does he bring his concern? Why does he go to this person?
4. When the young knight thinks he has lost the opportunity to be prince of the kingdom, what gives him peace/confidence that he chose well?
5. What made the knight brave enough to be honest?

### **More for younger readers:**

- *Penny and Her Marble* by Kevin Henkes
- *The Kitchen Knight* by Margaret Hodges
- *Miep and the Most Famous Diary: The Woman Who Rescued Ann Frank's Diary* by Meeg Pincus