



THE HUMMING ROOM
by Ellen Potter

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2015
Grades 3-5

*Submitted by Chely Cantrell, Branch Manager,
Ouachita Parish Public Library*

Title: *The Humming Room*
Author: Ellen Potter
Publisher: Square Fish
Pages: 208

SUMMARY

Twelve-year-old Roo Fanshaw speaks little and keeps to herself. She loves to hide from her drug-dealing parents in a “garden” made of stolen knick-knacks that she has created below her family’s trailer. When her parents are found murdered, it is the garden that gives her solace and a place to hide. Surprisingly, she is sent to live with a wealthy and eccentric uncle that she did not know existed. There she uncovers the mysteries that lie in his house on Cough Rock Island.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY

Ellen Potter grew up in New York City and currently lives with her family in Maine. She studied creative writing at Binghamton University. She decided to be a writer at the age of eleven years old, when she realized that the best books in the world were written for eleven-year-olds. She kicked off her career with a series of middle grade novels based on her character Olivia Kidney.

Biographical information taken from the author’s website, <http://www.ellenpotter.com/>, Accessed August 27, 2014.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Author’s website <http://www.ellenpotter.com/>

Book trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azvm-hzZGAM>

OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR

The Kneebone Boy (2011)

Pish Posh (2006)

Slob (2009)

Series: Olivia Kidney series, Otis Dooda series



RELATED TITLES (Students may also enjoy these titles)

The Aviary by Kathleen O'Dell

Doll Bones by Holly Black

Eight Keys by Suzanne LaFleur

Freaky Fast Frankie Joe by Lutricia Clifton

The Great Unexpected by Sharon Creech

Liar & Spy by Rebecca Stead

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Splendors and Glooms by Laura Amy Schlitz

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Art:

- Introduce class to the art of Dale Chihuly: www.chihuly.com
- Using malleable items such as pipe cleaners and clay, create your own flower or plant for your own secret garden.
- Younger grades can use other forms of media if necessary such as crayons, markers, etc. on paper.

Math:

- Using graph paper, have students create a garden space and calculate the area of their garden. Could go one step further and have them plan for plant spacing and how many plants would be needed to fill the space: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/12134>
- Petals of a flower could also be used in an exercise dealing with fractions: <http://eisforexplore.blogspot.com/2012/04/flower-fractions.html>

English:

- Read aloud *The Secret Garden* to students and discuss characters and plot. Follow this by reading aloud *The Humming Room*. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two books and the characters. Allow students to draw correlations between the two books and discuss what may have influenced the author after she read *The Secret Garden* to write *The Humming Room*.
 - Project Gutenberg features a free eBook copy of *The Secret Garden*, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/113?msg=welcome_stranger.

Science:

- The garden theme in *The Humming Room* can be carried into a science unit on plant life cycles and photosynthesis. <http://www.kidsdiscover.com/infographics/infographic-photosynthesis-for-kid/>
- Students could also start a “garden” in the classroom: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/school-gardening>. You can discuss the calming power that plants offer to people when participate in a gardening project. Throughout history gardens have been used to help with stress and healing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was Roo's hidden garden important to her?
2. Discuss a time that you had to take a risk. How did you handle the situation? Would you take the same risk again?
3. What do Roo and Phillip share in common?
4. What does the garden on Cough Rock symbolize?
5. What are the similarities between Jack and Roo?
6. Phillip believes his mother's ghost still lives in Cough Rock. Do you believe in ghosts? If so, why? If not, why not?
7. What is the humming sound that Roo hears?

RELATED WEBSITES

***The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett**

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/113/113-h/113-h.htm>

The story that inspired *The Humming Room*.

Burpee Seeds and Plants

<http://www.burpee.com/>

Explore the flowers and other plants that could grow in your garden.