

Study Guide

***Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt**

LEXILE 770

The Novel at a Glance**MORE ABOUT THE WRITER**

Natalie Babbitt has said that her career as a writer came about partly because of “seeds” planted by her parents years ago. Babbitt grew up during the Great Depression, at a time when many families had very little money for entertainment or for anything else. To keep Natalie and her sister entertained, their mother read children’s books aloud to them for hours at a time. The myths and fairy tales Babbitt heard from her mother made a lifelong impression on her imagination and gave her a love of stories and reading that has lasted through her adult life. At the same time, Babbitt credits her father for giving her “an ear for words” through his love of language and his creative—and often hilarious—use of it. Babbitt still loves reading fairy tales as much as she enjoys writing them and says that she is her own best audience.

Babbitt’s family also provided her with examples to learn from as she began her career as a writer. Her sister decided to become a writer long before Babbitt herself did, and their parents assumed that Natalie would pursue her early love of illustration. The two sisters combined their talents and produced a comic novel, but after an editor asked them to rewrite it substantially, they gave up on the project. After Babbitt married, her husband began a novel that she planned to illustrate. However, his work as a college administrator left him with little time for writing, and he eventually abandoned his literary ambitions. These experiences helped prepare Babbitt for the demands of a literary career and taught her three important lessons about writing. “You have to give writing your full attention, you have to like the revision process, and you have to like to be alone.”

BACKGROUND**Setting**

Tuck Everlasting takes place in an isolated village sometime in the past. Though the exact year isn’t revealed until the end of the novel, one can guess, based on details in the story, that it takes place before cars or other modern conveniences became available. By not focusing on the exact time or place, the writer allows the reader to concentrate on the timeless internal conflicts that Winnie must resolve.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Winnie Foster is a ten-year-old girl who dreams of adventure but is afraid to leave her family’s yard, even if permitted. Through circumstances that are out of her control, she meets the Tuck family, who tell her a story that could change her life forever.

Angus Tuck, the oldest of the Tuck family, is the dearest Tuck of all to Winnie. He warns Winnie of the dire consequences of drinking from the magic spring.

Mae Tuck, the wife of Angus, often forgets that she has been alive for more than eighty years. She takes one day at a time and tries to protect her family.

Tuck Everlasting *continued*

Miles Tuck, the elder Tuck brother, is serious and thoughtful. He believes that the gift of time should be used wisely.

Jesse Tuck, the youngest of the family, sees life as an eternal adventure and is trapped in time as a youth.

The man in yellow has spent many years of his life in the pursuit of wealth and immortality. Wily and desperate, he is willing to sacrifice others to satisfy his own desires.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Many English words come from Old English and other languages, such as Latin and French. When you look up words in a dictionary, you can find their origins in brackets after the entry words themselves. Many words have multiple origins. Some words are made up of parts, one of which is called a **prefix**, or a part added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. Prefixes are also defined in dictionaries.

Prologue–Chapter 7

frantic, p. 14

jaunty, p. 17

Chapters 8–18

vanity, p. 46

indomitable, p. 50

ancient, p. 51

Chapter 19–Epilogue

exultant, p. 125

unwittingly, p. 128

revulsion, p. 132