

## *Mountain Pose*

By Nancy Hope Wilson

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

### A Reading and Discussion Guide

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Groton Public Library, Groton, MA

Massachusetts  
Honor Book  
2002



#### **SUMMARY:**

When Ellie inherits a farm from her maternal grandmother, her father is suspicious. He doesn't want Aurelia to hurt Ellie the way she hurt her mother. His misgivings grow when he finds out that Aurelia has stipulated in her will that Ellie read a suitcase full of family diaries, generations old. After all, he and Ellie had not spoken to Aurelia in years; she didn't even call when Ellie's mother died - her own daughter! But Aurelia had never been close to her children; they remembered her as cruel and stern. Against her father's wishes, Ellie reads the diaries. As she reads, she discovers new things about her family and about the reasons for her grandmother's hard nature.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Ellie's dad doesn't want her to read the diaries that Aurelia left her. Do you think this is a good idea? Do you think it would have been better for Ellie and her father to read the diaries together?
2. What are some of the things Ellie discovers in the diaries? Do you think this information will bring the family closer together?
3. Ellie uses yoga to relax during a very stressful time in her life. Can you think of activities that would relax you?
4. Do you think Ellie and her father will move to Vermont and live on the farm?
5. What is shorthand? Why do you think Sarah Evans wrote in shorthand and code in her own diary?
6. What do you think Ellie's mother would say if she were alive to hear the story of her ancestors?

## **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Yoga becomes an important part of Ellie's life. Find out why and learn it yourself! It's becoming increasingly popular with young people and is a form of exercise that you can practice throughout your life. There are many forms of yoga; try out a few and find the one that suits you the best.
2. Learn different codes: codes have been used to send secret and sensitive information for hundreds of years. Some people even thought that Shakespeare wrote in code!
3. Create your own codes and send secret messages to your friends.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

*Reprinted from <http://www.author-illustr-source.com/nancyhopewilson.htm>*

For Nancy, becoming a writer was a big surprise. "As a child, I liked books, but I read them very slowly, savoring every word. I never finished them before the book report was due, so the plot summaries I handed in must have been creative writing.

"As a young adult I went into teaching. For 20 years, I taught in daycare centers, elementary schools, high schools, nursing homes and human service agencies. I taught English, and writing, parenting skills and thinking skills, creative dance and drama. I also worked for 5 years as a carpenter."

Nancy was 41 when her husband suggested she might be happier as a writer. "It was like a burst of fireworks in my mind. A memory that surfaced in my journal drew me into my first children's novel, and I was hooked.

"Memories are an important resource for me. I believe that memory is a filter, retaining experiences whose significance we cannot grasp at the time. To examine a memory closely is to decipher a message from the past."

She says she can't take credit for making up her books. "Instead the characters seem to appear to me, and I must get to know them. It is as if they guide me as I try to uncover what is 'true'.

Nancy Hope Wilson grew up in suburban Massachusetts and rural Vermont with five siblings and four dogs. She earned a BA from Swathmore College and an MAT from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

## HELPFUL LINKS:

Nancy Hope Wilson's website: <http://www.author-illustr-source.com/nancyhopewilson.htm>

Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Messages: <http://www.42explore2.com/codes.htm>

Yoga for teens: <http://www.allspiritfitness.com/topics/Yoga/KidsTeens.shtml>

### *Further Reading:*

*Chasing Redbird*, by Sharon Creech

*Holes*, by Louis Sachar

*Because of Winn-Dixie*, by Kate DiCamillo

*A Gathering of Days: a New England Girl's Journal*, by Joan W. Blos

*The Young Man and the Sea*, by Rodman Philbrick

*Park's Quest*, by Katherine Patterson



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