



The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs

Betty G. Birney, Matt Phelan (Illustrator)

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Life in Sassafras Springs has always been predictable, boring even, but one afternoon that changes when Eben McAllister's pa challenges him to find Seven Wonders in Sassafras that rival the real Seven Wonders of the World. The reward? An adventure that Eben's been craving -- a trip to Colorado.

Even doesn't think he'll have any luck -- he can't think of one single thing that could be considered wondrous in Sassafras -- but he's willing to try. Little does he know that the Wonders he'll discover among his neighbors, friends, relatives, and family will give him the adventure of a lifetime...without ever leaving his home.

The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs Details

Date : Published February 27th 2007 by Atheneum Books for Young Readers (first published 1980)

ISBN : 9781416934899

Author : Betty G. Birney , Matt Phelan (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs for online ebook

Linda says

Absolutely charming little chapter book for youngsters to either read themselves (4th grade and up) or have read to them. A young boy from a Missouri farm town dreams of traveling to Colorado and seeing the world, but first, his father challenges him to find seven extraordinary things in his own town before agreeing to the trip. My 4th grade granddaughter begged me to read this story, and I really enjoyed it.

Cory says

neah its ok i guess... what am i sayin in sucks big time

Helena Sorensen says

Instant hit with the kids. A treat from start to finish.

Julie says

What a delightful read! I used this for a summer school theme for my kids (www.bluegrassprincesses.com) and we had so much learning about the 7 World Wonders as well as finding Wonders in our own hometown!

The narrator was loveable and relatable, telling the story of being "bored" in his simple hometown and thinking that adventure only lay in the bigger world around him which was out of reach. The story was written beautifully, capturing the small town and era in such a realistic way. The characters were hilarious and memorable. And the "Wonders," while not at all expected, were magical.

I would recommend this book to any children who are bored with their circumstances because it may change their perspective on the world around them.

Sarah says

“Sometimes extraordinary things begin in ordinary places.” This is the lesson that eleven-year-old Eben McAllister is about to learn. Living with his Aunt Pretty and his Pa in the small farming community of Sassafras Springs, Missouri, in 1923, he longs for adventure beyond the hum-drum routine of farming life and spends his free time perusing a book about the Seven Wonders of the World. There certainly isn’t anything that interesting around Sassafras Springs. Or is there? Pa challenges Eben to find seven wonders in Sassafras Springs in seven days, and if he does, he will earn a train ticket to visit relatives in Colorado. Eben can hardly believe it, and he excitedly agrees to the deal. Working on the farm doesn’t leave much time for

searching, but Eben is determined to give the quest his best efforts.

Eben quickly discovers that not everyone takes kindly to his mission, and suddenly seven days seems like a rather short period of time. However, he and his faithful dog Sal travel all over the village inquiring about wonders, sometimes accompanied by Eben's best friend, Jeb. Eben comes to realize that things are not always as they appear, and sometimes the most mundane objects actually have an astonishing story to tell. Along the way, he learns fascinating details about some of Sassafras Springs' residents and the town's past and discovers that maybe his hometown isn't as lackluster as he always thought. As Pa says, it's all a matter of perspective, and Eben's is forever changed by his quest.

Infused with magical realism, Betty G. Birney's "The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs" seamlessly blends a young boy's coming-of-age with the tall tales typical of rural country life in this heartwarming children's novel. Told in the first person from Eben's point of view, the story bears the down-to-earth and often humorous language of a young boy who is growing up and who is eager to discover the world outside of his small birthplace. Delightful sketch illustrations add to the appeal of the narrative, which is divided into a chapter for each wonder and also subdivided into the story behind each wonder. "The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs" is a highly creative story that will enhance the reader's imagination and lead to a greater appreciation of one's roots, no matter where they have been planted. Don't be surprised if your own perspective shifts after reading this charming story!

Jim says

The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs by author Betty G. Birney is a heart-warming folk-tale that will inspire you to see more of what life has to offer you right around your own hometown. But only if you like drugged-out adventures with a ludicrous country bumpkin flare. This book is the equivalent of the Antiques Road Show meets Andy Griffith and Aunt Bee using a Ouija board to investigate the wacky stuff around Mayberry. Sound compelling? OK, I just made it sound way more interesting than it really is.

Eben is a young boy working on his dad's farm in Sassafras Springs, but he has a yearning to visit more of the world. He tells his dad that he desperately wants to visit the Seven Wonders of the World. This of course is impossible because his pa is just a poor ol' farmer and could never afford to help his youngster travel the globe. However, they do have a cousin in Colorado! Hot biscuits! Pa challenges Eben to find the wonders that exist in their very own town of Sassafras Springs. If Eben can pull it off in seven days, by golly Pa will get him a train ticket to go visit the fam' in Colorado. So Eben sets off on a mission to find the Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs. What he discovers will blow your mind. And if it doesn't, you'll feel like doing it yourself by the time you finish this book.

My initial reaction to the book is that it had good potential to teach a little lesson about loving your own home town and finding the wonder in the little things around you. Nope! Instead, what you get is an episode of Little House on the Prairie, except with Laura going off on acid-trips and coming back to Charles to detox while discussing her hallucinations. Good initial idea for a story, but terrible, undeveloped, stereo-typed characters, with a corny, hokey plot that becomes boring fast.

Qt says

A charming, fun little book! It wasn't predictable or cliched, and I liked how it always remained quite upbeat and cheerful, even though it occasionally touches on things like loneliness and disappointment. I like the ending, too, and each of the wonders of Sassafras Springs were intriguing. The "fantastical" element is also nicely done; while not strictly "realistic," the stories and miracles people talk about in the book add a pleasant, whimsical, and sometimes moving, touch.

Tim says

My daughter and I greatly enjoyed our visit to Sassafras Springs, where young Eben, enchanted by a book on the seven wonders of the world, is challenged by his Pa to find seven wonders closer to home. That home is 20s rural Missouri and the wonders are wonderful, indeed almost mystic and mythical at times. The pace of the book is deliberate, but Eben is a generous narrator and the characters and stories he meets fill him with respect for the small town he thought he knew so well. It was good to read aloud and moving at times (at least to this sentimental soul).

Kyra says

I loved this book! I read it a long time ago though so I'm going to re read it. Normally I don't re read but this book was so good that I just have to re read it.

Lonna Pierce says

If any mid-grade novel can be perfect, this one is. When Eben, a farm boy in 1926 Sassafras Springs, Missouri sees nothing special in his one-horse town, he longs to leave and visit the Seven Wonders of the World he's read about in books: The Great Pyramids at Giza, Colossus of Rhodes, Statue of Zeus, Lighthouse at Alexandria, Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, Temple of Artemis, and The Hanging Gardens of Babylon. His pa challenges Eben to find seven wonders in his own backyard; and if he can, his pa will pay for Eben's trip to see relatives in the Colorado mountains. Some of the best stories Eben discovers come out of his neighbors' mouths as they reveal their "wonders" to him and forever change his viewpoint of the world. We would all do well to look for our own hidden wonders in front of our eyes.

*I want to use this book as a springboard to 7 Wonders Study and collect more recent world wonders, with "Ben's Dream" by Chris VanAllsburg as a guide. Then, have students research and decide on the 7 Wonders of our hometown.

Katie says

A good old fashioned story, with the moral of: every place- no matter how ordinary, small, or boring- has something special to offer. Sometimes you just have to dig a little.

Nancy Hollingsworth says

Sweet. Read and listen to this one with your elementary age children.

Sharidan says

I love the look for "wonders" in sassafrass springs. I learned that everything is something great.

The Dusty Jacket says

"Sometimes extraordinary things begin in ordinary places" and, according to 11-year old Eben McAllister, there is absolutely, positively NO place more ordinary than Sassafras Springs. On this particularly hot July day, while Eben is buried in his book about the Seven Wonders of the World, his father offers him a deal: find seven wonders in seven days in Sassafras Springs and he will buy Eben a ticket to Colorado. SEVEN? Eben can't imagine even finding ONE Wonder let alone seven. But with a ticket out of town on the line, Eben is ready, willing, and able to look just about anywhere and everywhere to find them.

With folksy, down-home dialogue and quirky, lovable characters, Birney makes even an ordinary saw, a worn-down table, and a waterlogged bookcase true Wonders. Her story is like a tall glass of cold lemonade and the best spot on the front porch: refreshing, pleasing, and thoroughly enjoyable. I found it bittersweet when I came to the last page of this book. Having to say goodbye to Eben, his trusty dog, Sal, and the folks of Sassafras Springs was akin to leaving home for the first time. But as Eben reminds us, when Columbus and Balboa set off to discover faraway lands, even they knew that it wasn't "goodbye", just "see you soon".

I hope this little gem encourages readers to discover or rediscover the treasure that lies right outside their own doorstep, for sometimes the biggest Wonders are right in our own backyard.

Tanya says

This is a very sweet book. It reminded me of the stories by journalists that "every person has a story". The main character discovers that there is more to life than just what is in books, and exploration is possible in your home town.
