The Good Children Short Guide

The Good Children by Kate Wilhelm

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Overview

With four young protagonists and a firstperson narrator, The Good Children marks a departure from Wilhelm's usual writing; it also combines elements of the horror and the mystery genres, and shows her expertise at telling a story that is both believable and fantastic. Four children have to cope with the death of their father and a public funeral. Then their mother dies and they honor her wishes and bury her body in their backyard. They continue on with their lives initially as if she were there and, finally, as if she had abandoned them. The story is about the day-to-day mechanisms they use to cope with concealing their plight from outsiders. In telling her family's story, Liz establishes the reader's sympathy for these young people who are set adrift from the normal supports they could expect from the social and family groups. The children have moved from place to place and, as a result, neither they nor their parents have established a group of friends. They have no extended family because the parents are both orphans.

When they move to the house outside Portland where the story takes place, the family members have already established a way of hiding themselves from the community and school. To ensure that they can continue on this course, the father makes financial plans for his own death. Taking her own precautions, their mother has given the children many reasons not to trust outsiders. Thus the children succeed for many years in keeping two serious family secrets, namely that their mother is dead and they live alone without adult supervision. The horror of the story comes when the reader understands that they have buried their own mother. This act has the greatest effect on the youngest boy, Brian. Like most horror stories, The Good Children explores the difference between internal perspective, in this case represented by Liz, and the way outsiders see the children. Finally, Liz confesses to William Radix in order to get help for her young brother. The mystery, horror, and suspense plots combine to make this a gripping story.

About the Author

Kate Wilhelm has been in the writing business for decades. She first became famous for two lyrical, futuristic novels, Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang and Juniper Time. Both won her fan awards like the Hugo and awards given by other writers like Nebula (Nebula: 1968, 1988, 1989; Hugo and Jupiter, 1977; School Library Journal Best Adult Books for Young Adults award, 1998). She has been honored for both her science fiction and her mystery writings. In addition to publishing her work, she teaches writing and has raised three children (Douglas and Richard from her first marriage and Jonathan from her second). She began writing while her first children were small, but also pursued a number of other careers, including modeling and working as a telephone operator. Wilhelm has been a fulltime writer since 1956.

Kate Wilhelm was born in 1928 in Toledo, Ohio, to Jesse Thomas and Ann (McDowell) Meredith. She married Joseph B. Wilhelm on May 24, 1947, and divorced him in 1962.

Then on February 23, 1963, she married Damon Knight, a well-known editor and writer of science fiction. Wilhelm attended high school in Louisville, Kentucky, and obtained a Ph.D. from Michigan State University in 1996. As of the early 2000s, she resides in Eugene, Oregon. Her knowledge of the Pacific Northwest is evident in much of her fiction, both early and later works.

Wilhelm's first novel, a mystery called More Bitter than Death, which was published in 1962, was written like many of her earlier works in the evening after her chil dren had gone to sleep. Forty years later, she still maintains a regular writing schedule of at least four hours per day. As she stated in a Contemporary Authors interview, her one piece of advice to young writers is to guard their time jealously, to set aside the time that they are going to devote to writing and not let the world have it. Wilhelm has, from the first, been equally successful with novels and short stories. Her second published work, The Mile Long Spaceship (1963), was a collection of short stories about people living in space. Wilhelm went on to write many more works of long fiction, short stories for magazines, and short story collections such as the Orbit series (1966-1978) in the mystery and science fiction genres.

Wilhelm acknowledged that she has a broad taste in reading but was attracted to science fiction, the genre in which she has published more than half of her fiction and received most of her awards, because of the philosophical ideas. She and her. husband Damon Knight have a close working relationship and critique each other's work and collaborate on editing and teaching projects. Since 1962, Wilhelm has published more than forty-five novels and collections, and there is no evidence that her productivity will slow down. As The Good Children demonstrates, she is able to experiment with new kinds of fiction while continuing to explore certain interests: ecology, women's roles, the future of the human race, and psychological factors in fiction.

Setting

The story is set in the beautiful Pacific Northwest, fifteen miles south of Portland, Oregon. The nearest village is three miles away, so the family feels safe and secure in their own little world. No specific dates appear in the novel, but its setting is contemporary, and, judging from references to the Internet, the majority of the action takes place in the 1990s. In order for the plot to be successful, the four McNair children, Kevin, Amy, Elizabeth, and Brian, must live in an isolated area. Elizabeth, the narrator, says of their new house, "Our house was on a blacktop road that wound around the hills and, while there were neighbors, we met no one for more than two weeks." Their isolation allows them to act without being observed or disturbed. Thus they can conceal the accidental death and burial of their halfmad mother for several years until the eldest boy, Kevin, reaches his majority.

For the first half of the novel, the action is carried through the clever feints and deceits that the three older children use to keep them all out of institutionalized care, a horror they have been warned about by their orphaned mother. The second half concentrates on their youngest brother's grief, his refusal to believe his mother is dead, and his growing schizophrenia. Told through the perspective of the third child, Liz, who is eleven at the beginning of the tale and nineteen at the end, the story is peopled by the anxieties and fears of the children, which are embodied by malevolent and kindly ghosts, the latter identified by the youngest, Brian, as their own dead mother. Liz starts to worry about Brian's sanity soon after the terrible night their mother is found dead. However, she and her siblings can indulge him because they keep everyone else away from their little, rural haven.

The serene beauty of the Pacific Northwest, portrayed in their isolated home life and the many family camping trips to the oceanside, forms an arresting contrast to the turmoil in the household and provides a perfect setting for a family turned inward and gone astray. It also allows Liz to describe her sister Amy's growing interest in marine biology. The McNairs' proximity to the relatively large city of Portland, on the other hand, allows the two older children to stay home for the first year of college and for Liz and Brian to explore their interests in classical music. Without a large city close at hand, they would have more difficulty getting music lessons and going to concerts. The large city airport also allows the children to escape being noticed as traveling without a parent, which might not be so easy in a small airport.

Social Sensitivity

Serious social issues, for example the failure of the social service system, the police, the schools and the legal system to help children in distress, dominate this novel.

Wilhelm uses Leeann, the children's mother, to expose the state of social welfare and the foster care system, pointing to a widespread problem in the United States. Wilhelm is sensitive to the dangers of social services for orphaned and abandoned children; she is also aware of an uncaring society and a social climate that allow such situations as the McNair children's to go undetected.

Moreover, Wilhelm understands family dynamics as she contrasts the orphaned childhood of Liz and Brian with that of William Radix, whose father refuses to understand his talents and wishes and thus pushes him into a career Will dislikes.

Liz's family exhibits a kind of pathology in which the children feel compelled to act idiosyncratically out of loyalty to their parents, whose own psychological development was damaged by childhood experiences. While Leeann feels she has a perfect family, even her young children know there are problems. They never fit in anywhere they live, and they are not encouraged to do so. This sort of problem should be addressed by other caring adults in institutions like schools and churches, settings supposedly designed to support children. How these children could have gotten help is a question not even the reader can fully answer.

Wilhelm criticizes contemporary isolation of families and unconnected communities across the United States.

Literary Qualities

In Elizabeth McNair, the viewpoint character and narrator of the story, Wilhelm created an unreliable narrator, one whose incomplete observations, while interesting, require the reader to constantly evaluate events and their meaning. Liz is a firstperson narrator, speaking to William Radix, her intended reader, as if she were telling the story in person. Liz tells the story from two perspectives: one is as she experiences it and the other is as a nineteen year old, the time at which she finally writes down the tale.

Wilhelm has very carefully plotted the story, using establishment chapters in the beginning to introduce the family, and especially Liz's mother and father and their history in chapters two and three, and then creating stages in the children's attempts to cope with their orphaned lives. For example, although Leeann's ideas about the outside world dominate the children's thinking and their subsequent actions for most of the novel, she is dead by chapter six, and both her and her husband's deaths are foreshadowed. Liz warns the reader of impending doom as Wilhelm suggests that the worst is coming. Moving to Oregon is the end of what Liz thinks of as phase one and the beginnings of phase two, the children's life without their parents.

In chapter nine, Liz identifies the beginning of phase three, her attempts to get her family out of the dilemma they created for themselves by concealing their mother's death. She claims she has begun to understand Brian's problems and to try to find ways to return him to sanity. She realizes that the family cannot always get away with their deception, and she sets about, in her own immature fashion, to solve their problem. This phase ends when she finally confronts Brian about his creation of ghosts to cope with the death of his mother. In chapter twenty Liz attempts to make Brian accept his mother's death, and her doing so precipitates a catatonic fit. This event leads Liz into the last phase where mental health professionals want to discount her story explaining her battered face, acquired when she and Brian fall on each other, as an accident. Then they conclude that he may never get better and she knows that, once again, she must act independently and get him away from another institution. But she also must slowly reveal the family's secrets if Brian is to get well. Wilhelm shows these stages in Liz's development of self-realization and maturity specifically in relation to her loyalty to Brian and their mother and father's ideals of the family.

Wilhelm also mixes conventions, those repeated features that help us to identify mystery, science fiction, romance, and other types of fiction from one another. She especially uses the kinds of characters and plots that we find in those horror novels known as psychological thrillers, like Andrews's Flowers in the Attic, where some mental aberration causes people to act irrationally.

In The Good Children, it is the mother, Leeann, and the youngest son, Brian, who act out the psychological thriller as they fail to cope rationally with death and tragedy in their family life. Wilhelm also uses mystery novel conventions, in that Liz must figure out her brother Brian's involvement in their mother's death through a series of clues she narrates as a child and reinterprets as a nineteen year old who is telling the story.

Themes and Characters

The Good Children is very much a novel about the opposition some families feel to ward institutions. One theme is the distrust the children have for anyone outside the family, especially institutions like the school and the welfare system, against which their mother repeatedly warns them. Liz, the third child of four, tells the story as she sees it, trying to preserve her state of mind at each stage in the children's dreadful tale.

Their mother instills the importance of family in all of the children. Abandoned at the age of four, she was confined to institutions for unwanted children or foster homes where the pets were treated better than she.

Her only security comes when she marries Warden McNair. As she asserts at the end of chapter two, when "you have family, you have everything."

The children's mother and father disappear early on in the story, although the influence of their mother, Leeann, continues to shape the plot. Warden, or Will, is more than twice her age. Liz passes on her mother's story of being an abandoned child who had poor eyesight and lived through a number of horrible foster care placements until she ran away at the age of fifteen, moving to Florida to work in motels. Leeann describes "living rough," lying about her age, coping without enough money to rent a room, and always being in fear. She then explains how she was rescued by Warden McNair, a sweet, caring engineer who first tried to talk her out of marriage then went ahead and helped her falsify her age so that they could be together. From that point, Leeann refuses to leave his side, even though it means her family must travel from place to place following his career moves.

Leeann's devotion to her husband over her family is apparent throughout the early stages of the novel, as is her psychological insecurity about outsiders, which she passes on to the children. Leeann's life is built around her husband and her desire for the ideal family, one that is independent and self-sufficient. She refuses to face Warden's death and blames everyone outside the family for taking away her security. Her response is to place the burden of keeping the family together upon her children, and to retreat both from the outside world and from her own children. She even controls them from her grave, and her belief that they will always follow her wishes does them a great disservice when she is found dead in a freak accident on the lawn just a few months after Warden has died.

A second major theme is the unsuitability of most public institutions to care for parentless children. This theme is developed through Leeann McNair's stories of her childhood and through Liz's experiences of school and of the mental institution to which her brother, Brian, is confined after a breakdown when he is seventeen.

In the course of telling the family story, Liz describes her parents' childhoods. However, Leeann's paranoia, indulged by her husband, dominates the children for at least eight years after her death. Out of a string of uncaring institutions, brutal foster homes, and

degrading experiences with the social services system in Tennessee, where she was born, Leeann developed a view of public welfare as dangerous rather than helpful. She tells her children these stories, and the stories cause them to make certain decisions, like burying her in the backyard, concealing her death, and concealing their youngest brother's growing insanity, all of which seems logical to them and would be questionable to the outside world.

Leeann McNair dies early in the novel and is buried by her own children in their backyard. They are all quite young at the time, fifteen, fourteen, twelve, and six. She has more or less instructed them, it is their belief, to act in this manner, given her reaction to her husband Warden's death and funeral. "Never let them paint me and put me on display," she says. This is just one more public custom, a part of life and death that most of us take for granted, one that Leeann rejects.

Elizabeth, or Liz, is the viewpoint character in this novel. At age eleven when the novel begins, she provides an astute but changing perspective on family dynamics.

She observes and comments on the behavior and intentions of other family members and has a somewhat cynical attitude towards people, family, and outsiders alike.

She feels closest to her youngest brother, Brian, and is the only family member willing to explore the mystery of his ghostly hallucinations. Her older siblings, Kevin and Amy, seem willing to ignore Brian's inability to believe his mother is dead, but Liz never stops worrying about it, nor is she willing to cede responsibility for him to mental health professionals or state institutions. Elizabeth takes to heart the mystery of Brian's growing illness and its relationship to the death of their mother, finally convincing herself, if not her siblings, that the truth about that death must be talked about if Brian is ever to be normal again.

Even by the end of the novel, when she and the family lawyer have kidnapped Brian from a mental health facility, she cannot be sure that he will ever be better. She can only be sure that she will take care of him.

When the story begins, Brian, the youngest, is just six years old and, given the family's isolation, he is dependent on the family members and on his mother for his social and psychological development. A lost little boy type, Brian is inexplicably attached to his dead mother. The family's insular lifestyle both protects him and allows his pathology to go unnoticed throughout his childhood, until he becomes virtually nonfunctional as a young adult and causes a family crisis that is misinterpreted by the outside world.

Brian provides the mystery-plot for the novel. He simply will not accept the fact that his mother is gone. While he acknowledges that she is buried in the backyard, beneath the garden that he lovingly tends over the years, he also insists that her ghost is with him. His insistence becomes increasingly pathological as he refuses to be away from home for the night, except on family camping trips. He insists on talking to, singing to, and later, as his musical talent develops, playing music to his mother. He also repeatedly insists that he must stay close to her because she scares away the other ghosts that

haunt him. Brian largely ignores the older children, and Elizabeth, who worries about everything from Brian's sanity to whether the family money is sufficient, seems to be his only contact with the real world. When she turns on him near the end of the novel, forcing him to confront his mother's death, his schizophrenia takes over.

Kevin, the oldest boy, is fifteen when the story begins and twenty-three at the end. It was at his insistence that the family moved to what they thought would be their permanent home near Portland, Oregon. His insistence that they stay together as a family, that they keep the house, and keep the secret of their mother's death, seems to be the major motivation behind the plot. Liz's observations about Kevin's self-absorbed decision and Amy's tendency to plan the future of all four without consulting the others are typically cynical. Kevin and Amy plot the disappearance of their mother, develop elaborate plans, and adjust them as needed. Kevin is somewhat shadowy in Liz's descriptions because he is away from the family at nineteen, while Brian is still young. Kevin is much more concerned with keeping their mother's death secret so that its negative implications will not interfere with his plans to get a good education, start a company, and have an independent future.

Amy is a little more completely drawn.

Fourteen at the beginning and somewhat unready to take the responsibilities that Kevin insists upon, Amy is also very sure of her own professional interests from a young age. While she tries to take on responsibilities for her younger brother and sister, her heart does not seem to be in it. Amy is interested in marine biology, and she goes to the seashore whenever possible. She pursues her studies both as a teenager and, later when she goes to college. She and Kevin are portrayed as closer to each other than to Brian and Elizabeth. This is Elizabeth's recurrent observation and a source of frustration for her as neither Amy nor Kevin demonstrates, from her perspective, proper loyalty to family. Absolute isolation from society is instilled in Liz and Brian by their mother, whereas Amy and Kevin act on the principle without necessarily accepting that they personally must stay isolated.

Warden is an engineer in his forties when the story opens. He is obviously very important to his wife, Leeann, as the first person who was kind to her and as another lonely, kindred spirit, albeit a bit more successful. Warden is everything to his wife and beloved of his children, but he is also a very shadowy figure in the novel, present in Liz's observations and her mother's stories, but never very concretely depicted.

For example, we know he is an engineer but Liz never describes his workplace or his colleagues, except in the most unflattering terms after Warden is killed in an industrial accident during their first year in the Portland area. He comes through as an idealized protector who enables Leeann to face life. Thus Wilhelm uses characters' relationships to suggest Leeann's pathology and the family's pathology, which later gets the children into so much trouble.

Two individuals enter the children's lives four years after their mother's death. They provide the only contacts the children have with outsiders, and each is caring and

affectionate though the children are not initially disposed to accept them. Nevertheless, each persists and their loyalty to this family in trouble helps Liz to get the four children out of the situation in which they find themselves by the time her brother Brian is close to his majority. When Liz is nineteen, she realizes that she is in love with one of them, a young lawyer named William Radix.

William Radix is a young man just getting started in private practice when he enters the McNair family sphere. Liz's comment about their first meeting, when she opened the door to him on a Sunday afternoon, was "I gaped." He was wearing shorts and a tank top and high-top sneakers. Liz is very skeptical of him, and her first question is, "Is this going to be billed to us?" She struggles to understand the family finances in a way that her siblings do not seem to grasp. At this point, Liz is only fifteen and she sets about matchmaking between Radix and her older sister, Amy. For the rest of the novel, he comes in and out of the siblings' lives, helping them to solve problems, gently insisting that they conform to certain rules, and, ultimately helping Amy to solve the mystery of her brother's mental illness and the conundrum of getting him away from a destructive mental treatment program. William is engaged at the beginning of their acquaintance, but, through exposure to the family he gradually makes his way into Liz's still very cynical and wellguarded consciousness. William even reveals to her that he is more interested in art than in law, that his father expects him to take up the family law firm, a fate he is determined to evade, and finally, he lets himself accept her love by wresting guardianship for Brian from Mr. Martens, the lawyer in whom Liz's father had originally placed responsibility for the family insurance and trust funds. Liz gradually comes to realize that even people with both parents living can be very unhappy.

The other significant outsider, Eleanor Inglewood, a gruff, independent rancher, enters the story soon after Leeann's "disappearance" is engineered by her children. In chapter thirteen (a third of the way through the novel), the family's primary lawyer and guardian, Mr. Martens, hires her as an interim care person for the four children. She comes in to help the children and instantly takes young Brian's difficulties to heart, trying to draw him away from his fixation on his dead mother and provide him with some form of adult affection. Her first words to him are almost, "One day maybe you'd like to come out and see the horses, take a ride?"

This becomes a point of contention, as Brian refuses to stay overnight away from the house, and Liz begins to understand how deeply his belief in his mother's ghost has affected him. Mrs. Inglewood and the young lawyer, William Radix, are the only two adults Liz trusts, and Liz trusts Mrs. Inglewood much more than she does William Radix. She notes that Mrs. Inglewood gives the other children the freedom they have not had in almost four years, since their mother's death. With Kevin in his first year at Portland State, another adult in the house leaves Amy and Liz free to spend time away from Brian. Mrs. Inglewood brings many positive changes: the bed linens are changed, for example. Mrs. Inglewood stays stubbornly with the family through many transitions, and she even appears on her own to help Liz and William "detoxify" the young Brian after they kidnap him from the mental institution where he is being held near the end of the novel.

The last significant character, Mr. Martens, is introduced at the end of chapter four, soon after Warden's death. Mr. Martens is the exact opposite of William Radix.

To him, the McNair family is just one of a long string of responsibilities for which he is paid. Liz has very little contact with him, and the four children are constantly hiding information from him as they fear he will be only too quick to consign them to welfare and social workers should he find out about their mother's distraught condition and death. Liz acknowledges that he is fair with the family finances, arrives regularly to discuss them with Kevin and to make plans for their care and education; but that is the limit of his involvement. Mr. Martens is functionally a good contrast with William Radix, as he is not seeking any kind of emotional involvement, while he still pursues a responsible attitude towards the orphaned children.

Topics for Discussion

1. This novel borrows literary techniques from several kinds of fiction, for example, romance, science fiction and fantasy, mystery, and westerns. What do these categories have to do with content and with methods of selling books?

2. Within each of the genres mentioned above there are subcategories which Wilhelm pays tribute to, for example, the Gothic, which is a kind of romance; the horror novel that is a kind of fantasy; and the psychological mystery.

Pick a horror novel and a mystery novel and discuss what characteristics you find in these that match elements in Wilhelm's The Good Children.

3. Liz and her sister and brothers believe they have to solve all of their problems alone after the death of their mother. What parental lessons contribute to their having the belief that the family is against the outside world? Were these lessons constructive or destructive for the children?

4. It is easy to see why Leeann, the children's mother, does not want her children to be in foster care. Her own childhood experiences of foster care were terrible. Discuss the strengths and failures of the foster care system in your state. What options are open to children who lose their parents or whose parents cannot take care of them?

5. Liz makes it very clear that she and her older siblings know how to conceal the death of their mother. Yet to the outside world, and to readers, their actions seem disturbing. How can we evaluate their action?

6. The death of a parent is never easy for children, even when they are fully grown. How much blame would you assign to the children for their actions and how much to their mother, given her preparation of them?

7. Wilhelm explores the psychological problems of Leeann, the children's mother, and Brian, the youngest child. While Liz herself cannot determine whether Brian really sees good and bad ghosts, readers suspect that Brian has some sort of problem. Wilhelm's use of psychology draws from Freud's early work on childhood illnesses. Discuss Freud and his view of a case like Brian's. How have twentieth-century treatment of similar cases changed some of these methods?

8. In order to solve the mystery of her mother's death, Liz must investigate the central question of Brian's mental state, whether he is temporarily or permanently insane, and questions the existence of ghosts. How does her family's need to keep their secrets hinder her investigation? By the end of the novel, are the siblings better off than they were at the novel's outset?

9. The Pacific Northwest forms a scenic background to the novel. What is the Pacific Northwest like? What is the climate like around Portland? Why would Leeann McNair want to live there?

10. Wilhelm uses this setting to explore the talents of the McNair children. Several family trips to the ocean coast give Liz the opportunity to describe her sister Amy's marine life studies and also to show her knowledge of ocean tides. What is different about coastal life on the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans? How accurate are Wilhelm's portrayals of tide pools, salt-water slugs, and the ocean tides?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. This novel is both mystery story and an example of "Gothic horror." State the characteristics of the Gothic novel. When were Gothic novels first written? What characteristics in The Good Children occur in other Gothic novels? Use this topic to explore the mystery novel or the horror novel as a type of fiction, drawing parallels between this type of fiction and The Good Children.

2. In this novel, we get Liz's view of her parents, siblings, and the outside world. How would a psychologist or social worker view this family?

3. Brian, Liz's youngest brother, is finally diagnosed as schizophrenic. Liz disputes this diagnosis. Do some research on schizophrenia. On the basis of your research, evaluate Brian's treatment in the mental institution.

4. Often psychoanalysis entails patients talking about their dreams and nightmares. The treatment is aimed at getting them to acknowledge some forgotten or repressed trauma. Can this treatment work while Brian and his family hide the truth? Define Freud's idea of the "talking cure" and apply it to Brian's problems.

5. Wilhelm often writes about ecology. In this novel, she links the family's home in the Pacific Northwest with one of the children's future career, such as Amy's desire to be a marine biologist. What do marine biologists do? What aspect of their studies fascinates Amy?

6. What characterizes the marine life of the Pacific Northwest? How is this part of the novel made relevant to the main story?

7. Both Brian and Liz have musical talent, as well as an intense interest in music. They both learn to play the violin and to play in quartets. What instruments are found in a quartet? What kinds of music do Brian and Liz play?

8. Wilhelm uses the failures of child support services within the social services system throughout the United States as an important factor in explaining this plot. Look into the social services system in your state and find out what happens to orphaned or abandoned children.

9. Foster care comes under sharp criticism in this novel. Liz's mother, Leeann, describes foster parents who beat her, who fed their pets better than they fed her, who drank and neglected her. The only kind woman she remembers is one who was an alcoholic but treated her well. Research the foster care system in your state in order to determine the criteria that individuals must meet in order to be foster parents.

10. Wilhelm describes several exotic cooking styles that Leeann embraces as she cares for her family. Do some research on two or three of these styles and find out what ingredients the family would need to make these recipes.

For Further Reference

Leigh, Serena. Review. Voice of Youth Advocates (October 1, 1998): 280. This succinct review explores questions concerning the possibility of a family being perfect.

Melton, Emily. Review. Booklist (February 1, 1998): 109. This brief summary focuses on the characters as a family and their loyalty to each other, whether it is justifiable or misplaced.

Platt, Charles. Dream Makers: The Uncommon People Who Write Science Fiction, vol.

1. New York: Berkley Publishing, 1980.

This book is a collection of interviews with successful authors of science fiction. It gives many insights into Wilhelm's ideas about writing fiction and how she thinks fiction writing should be taught.

"Wilhelm, Katie Gertrude." In Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, vol. 94.

Detroit: Gale, 2001, pp. 425-29. This entry provides a biographical sketch including publications and awards.

Related Titles/Adaptations

V. C. Andrews's Flowers in the Attic tells of four children who are taken back to their grandparents by their mother after their father dies. Their grandfather will not accept the children, and they are hidden away in an attic until one of them dies and the others reveal themselves. Stephen King's The Shining is about a family of three who go to live in an isolated resort during the winter off-season. The father wants to write a book, but the ghosts of previous residents haunt him, his wife, and his son. Stephen King's Pet Cemetery is set in a small rural community, where some pets are buried in a different kind of hallowed ground and then brought back to life. When a man buries his son there, he starts a chain of horrible events. Dianna Wynne Jones's The Ogre Downstairs is about three children and their widowed mother experiencing many changes when the mother remarries. The children reject the new husband, calling him "the ogre downstairs," but his help is much appreciated when they run afoul of a simple magic spell that animates their rulers, pencils, and toys.

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