The Fourteenth Goldfish

AUTHOR: Jennifer Holm
PUBLISHER: Random House
COPYRIGHT DATE: 2014
GENRE: Realistic Fiction/Science Fiction
LEXILE: 550L

SUMMARY:
A lot is happening in eleven year old Ellie’s life. She just started middle school, her beloved goldfish died, she misses her old best friend, and her mother has just become the guardian of a strange 14 year-old boy - who happens to be Ellie’s Grandpa Melvin. As Ellis gets to know her grandfather better, she also discovers the scientist in herself. But Grandpa Melvin’s big breakthrough is forcing Ellie to ask herself something. Is every scientific discovery good? Does she want to be young forever?

BOOKTALK:
Scientists save lives, solve mysteries, and change the course of history, but can science go too far? Eleven year old Ellie is beginning to discover her inner scientist. But as she looks into the face of the 14 year old boy who claims to be her grandfather, she has to wonder if every scientific discovery is good.

AUTHOR’S NAME: Jennifer Holm
Author’s Website: http://www.jenniferholm.com/

Other books written by the author:

Novels

Our Only May Amelia (1999) - Newbery Honor
The Creek (2003)
Middle School Is Worse Than Meatloaf: A Year Told Through Stuff (2007)
Penny from Heaven (2007) - Newbery Honor
Turtle in Paradise (2010) - Newbery Honor
The Trouble with May Amelia (2011)
Boston Jane trilogy

Graphic novels (with Matt Holm)

Babymouse series (2005 - present)
Squish series (2011 - present)
Sunny Side Up (2015)
CHALLENGING WORDS
Definitions provided by Merriam & Webster Word Central

- **regenerate** (p.24): to generate or produce again; *especially*: to replace (a lost or damaged body part) by a new growth of tissue
- **charlatan** (p.38): a person who pretends to have knowledge or ability
- **belligerent** (p.39): eager to or showing eagerness to fight
- **immortal** (p.53): living or lasting forever
- **hieroglyphic** (p.81): a system of writing mainly in pictorial characters; *especially*: the picture script of the ancient Egyptian priesthood
- **coq au vin** (p.87): a French meal of chicken cooked in a wine sauce
- **bacterium** (p.94): any of a group of single-celled microorganisms that live in soil, water, the bodies of plants and animals
- **MIT** (p.114) Massachusetts Institute of Technology - a private university in Cambridge, Mass, known for its programs in science and engineering
- **to abolish** (p.121): to do away with completely; put an end to
- **sarcophagus** (p.165): a stone coffin

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Is every scientific discovery good?
2. Why doesn’t Ellie want to live forever? Would you like to live forever?
3. What might be the consequences of Melvin’s discovery?
4. How does Ellie learn to think like a scientist?
5. What do you think is strange about the new jellyfish from Billy?
6. Think about your own grandfather. What would you ask him if you had the chance to meet him at the age of 14? What kind of child do you think he would be? Do you think your grandfather had the same kind of experiences as a young adult that you have now?

ACTIVITIES WITH STANDARDS:

Language Arts
- Write a short story about the new, strange, jellyfish Ellie receives from Billy at the end of the book. You may choose to write a *prequel* about how Billy discovered the jellyfish and what it does; or you may write the *sequel* about how Ellie learns what is so strange about it.
**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3**
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**Science**

- Conduct an experiment, or find examples from the world around you, to prove Newton’s 1st Law of Motion.

Newton’s First Law of Motion, as described by Melvin in *The Fourteenth Goldfish*:
“*An object at rest will stay at rest and an object in motion will stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force.*”

Use the Scientific Method to keep your experiment fair and organized:
  - Question
  - Research
  - Hypothesis
  - Experiment
  - Conclusion
  - Share

When sharing your findings, answer this question:
What would the world be like if Newton’s 1st law of motion were NOT true?

**Indiana Science 4.4.3**
Investigate how changes in speed or direction are caused by forces: the greater the force exerted on an object, the greater the change.

**Social Studies/Language Arts**

- Students each choose a famous scientist (*not* named by Melvin in the book) to research and teach the class about.
For a comprehensive list of notable scientists, try these websites:
  - Science Kids: Famous Scientist Facts
  - Fact Monster: Notable Scientists
  - Nobel Prize in Physics
  - Nobel Prize in Chemistry
  - Nobel Prize in Medicine

Student reports should answer the following questions:
How does your scientist’s work shape the world we live in today?
What did he/she discover and how?
What problem did he/she solve? OR What question did he/she answer?
How did your scientist’s work affect his/her life?

Students can present their research using any method or multimedia tools they feel are appropriate.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7
Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Indiana Social Studies 6.1.20
Analyze cause-and-effect relationships, keeping in mind multiple causations, including the importance of individuals, ideas, human interests, beliefs and chance in history.

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

Recommended Resources from the book:

Marie Curie and the Nobel Prize
History of Science
Manhattan Project
Isaac Newton
Jonas Salk

Famous Scientists
Science Kids: Famous Scientist Facts
Fact Monster: Notable Scientists
Nobel Prize in Physics
Nobel Prize in Chemistry
Nobel Prize in Medicine

About Jellyfish
How Stuff Works: Jellyfish
http://animals.howstuffworks.com/marine-life/jellyfish.htm

Wonderopolis: Are Jellyfish Made of Jelly?
http://wonderopolis.org/wonder/are-jellyfish-made-of-jelly

Jelly Watch
http://www.jellywatch.org/

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