

Elsie Mae Has Something To Say

by Nancy J. Cavanaugh

Educator Guide



About the Book

Elsie Mae is pretty sure this'll be the best summer ever. She gets to explore the cool, quiet waters of the Okefenokee Swamp around her grandparents' house with her new dog, Huck, and she's written a letter to President Roosevelt that she's confident will save the swamp from a shipping company and make her a major hometown hero. What's more, Elsie Mae gets wind of hog bandits stealing from swamper families, and she sees another opportunity to make her family proud while waiting to hear back from the White House.

But when her cousin Henry James, who dreams of one day becoming a traveling preacher like his daddy, shows up and just about ruins her investigation with his "Hallelujahs," Elsie Mae will learn the hard way what it really means to be a hero.



About the Author

Nancy J. Cavanaugh is the award-winning author of *This Journal Belongs to Ratchet*, *Always*, *Abigail*, and *Just Like Me*. She was an elementary school teacher for more than fifteen years, as well as a library media specialist. She and her husband and daughter enjoy winters in sunny Florida and eat pizza in Chicago the rest of the year. Visit nancyjcavanaugh.com.



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Discussion Questions

1. Which character is most like you? Explain why.
2. Which character is least like you? Explain why.
3. Does the Okefenokee Swamp sound like a place you would like to visit? Explain why or why not.
4. Would you have liked to live in the 1930s? Explain why or why not.
5. Do you think Elsie Mae and Henry James would have become friends if there had not been a hog bandit mystery going on? Explain why or why not.
6. Do any of Elsie Mae's family members remind you of any of your relatives? If yes, explain why.
7. What part of the story made you laugh?
8. What part of the story made you happy?
9. What part of the story made you sad?
10. What part of the story made you angry?
11. Name at least one interesting thing you learned about the Okefenokee Swamp.
12. Did you learn anything about American history from reading this book? If yes, what did you learn?
13. Looking back at the story, were there any clues about Uncle Lone's connection to the hog bandits?
14. At the start of the story, Elsie Mae wants more than anything to be a hero. Why does she change her mind about that?
15. Why do you think the author wrote *Elsie Mae Has Something to Say*?



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Cross-Curriculum Possibilities

1. Choose an animal that lives in the Okefenokee Swamp. Do some research about that creature. Then write a short report in the point of view of that animal incorporating what you learned in your research. (Example: *I am an alligator. I enjoy living in the Okefenokee Swamp. It is the perfect habitat for me because...*)
2. Make a list of the trees, shrubs, and flowers that grow in the Okefenokee Swamp. Choose three or four of them. Find out why these things grow well in the swamp. On a poster board, sketch or draw each one and label it, then add a caption explaining why the swamp is a good place for these things to grow.
3. Make a United States map showing all the National Wildlife Refuges in our country.
4. Pretend you are President Roosevelt or Elsie Mae and record yourself giving a speech celebrating the National Wildlife Refuge status of the Okefenokee Swamp. Use a costume or a prop to help you get into character.
5. Make a brochure highlighting the important things that were going on in our country in the 1930s.
6. Is there something important to you that you would like to save? Write a letter to a person who could help you save it.
7. Make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting your present-day life wherever you live to Elsie Mae's life in the 1930s in the Okefenokee Swamp.
8. Make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting your personality with the personality of one of the characters in the book.
9. Find a map of the Okefenokee Swamp. Then look in the book to find specific places mentioned in the story. Draw your own Okefenokee Swamp map highlighting those places.
10. Construct a diorama or model of Elsie Mae's grandparents' homestead on Honey Island. Make it authentic by looking back in the story for ways the author describes the cabin, the yard around the cabin, and the landscape of Honey Island.

