

- ★ “Doll stories frequently raise issues of power and agency, and this one explores that territory with freshness and respect for the seriousness of children’s emotions. It’s also funny.” —*The Horn Book* (starred review)
- ★ “Intricately detailed and nuanced characters, relatable domestic scenes with emotional heft, and evocative writing make for an enchanting, gratifying read.” —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

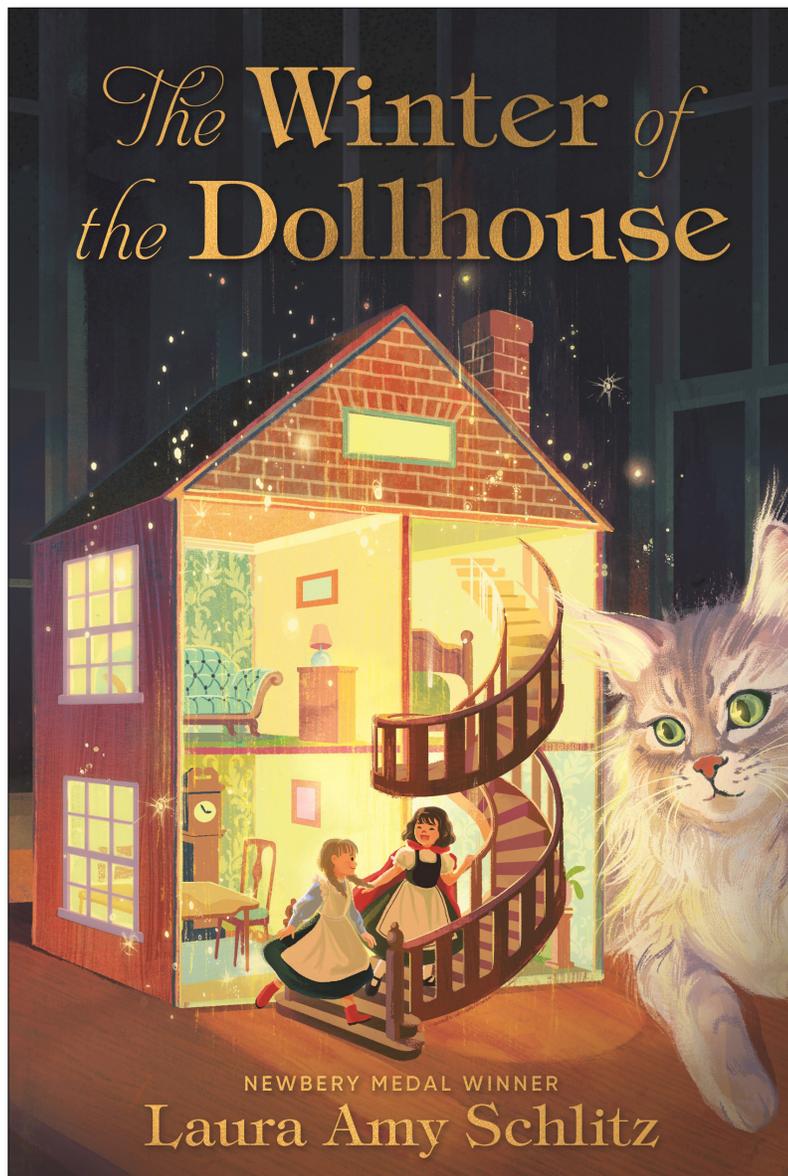
About the Book

On a gloomy November night, eleven-year-old Tiphany Stokes saves an old lady from collapsing in the street. An antique doll named Gretel watches them, longing for Tiph to rescue her from life in a shop window. Though none of these three characters realizes it, their worlds are about to change: Gretel will no longer be a precious prisoner. The old lady—is she a witch?—will discover the secret hidden in her long-neglected dollhouse. And Tiph—whose parents rejoice that she is “never any trouble”—will become a thief, a dog walker, an actor, and, best of all, a friend.

This captivating coming-of-age story is touching, funny, and beautifully layered, with a fairy-tale ending that only Newbery Medalist Laura Amy Schlitz could deliver.

Instructional Standards

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the instructional standards for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



HC: 9781536236088
Ebook: 9781536247589

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of the alternating points of view, where one chapter follows Tiph's perspective and the next follows Gretel's? Was that confusing, or did it help you to see what was really happening in the story?
2. Can you imagine what it would be like to be a doll? What would you think about? What would be important to you? Would you rather be Gretel or Red?
3. Gretel, of course, is from the fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel," a tale about two children abandoned in the woods at the wishes of their stepmother. There they find a gingerbread house covered with candy and owned by an old witch. Are there any similarities between this story and Tiph's story?
4. Mr. DiLucca, the owner of the doll shop, didn't really like children. How would you describe him? What do you think of him?
5. Were you surprised when you found out what had happened to the cuckoo clock from Mr. DiLucca's store? What did you think? Did it change your view of Tiph and her brother?
6. Have you ever wanted something so much that you saved and saved and tried to figure out ways to earn money? Did you eventually get it?
7. Everyone has bad days at school, at least occasionally. What do you consider a bad day?
8. Everyone has done things that are mean or not right. Does that make someone a bad person? Tiph struggles with balancing the good and bad sides of herself. Do you think she is mostly good or mostly bad? Why?
9. The dolls have fun thinking about what a perfect house would look like. What would your perfect house have?
10. Gretel is not used to having a friend and doesn't always know how to act or what to think. On page 169, the author writes, "If you were alone, you could believe you were right all the time. If you had a friend, you learned you weren't." What do you think this means? Do you think this is true?

11. Why do you think Tiph didn't tell her parents about her new part in the play?
12. Has anyone ever told you to just be yourself when you were nervous about how to act in a particular situation like Holly told Tiph? What did that mean to you? Was it helpful?
13. On page 238, Mr. DiLucca says to Tiph, "If you steal and steal and steal, you may find that one day something's been stolen from you—the idea of your own honesty and truth. And you won't find it easy to get it back." Does this make sense to you? Do you agree with it?
14. Do you think Tiph should tell her parents the true story about Gretel?
15. This book has a lot to say about relationships, both in a family and with friends. How does someone make friends? How does Tiph fit into her family? What do you know about Ms. Rózsahegyi's family, both present and past?
16. Do you have any adult friends? How is being friends with an adult different from spending time with parents or with friends your own age?

About Laura Amy Schlitz

Laura Amy Schlitz is the author of the middle-grade novels *The Night Fairy*; *A Drowned Maiden's Hair*, winner of the inaugural Cybils Award; *The Hired Girl*, winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award, a National Jewish Book Award for Young Adult Literature, and a Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction; *Amber and Clay*; and the Newbery Honor Book *Splendors and Glooms*. She was awarded a Newbery Medal for *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*. Laura Amy Schlitz lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

These questions were prepared by Grace K. Worcester, a former youth services consultant for the Vermont Department of Libraries. She has spent her entire professional life working with books and children, and she has served on the Newbery Medal, Caldecott Medal, *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award*, and National Book Award for Young People's Literature committees.