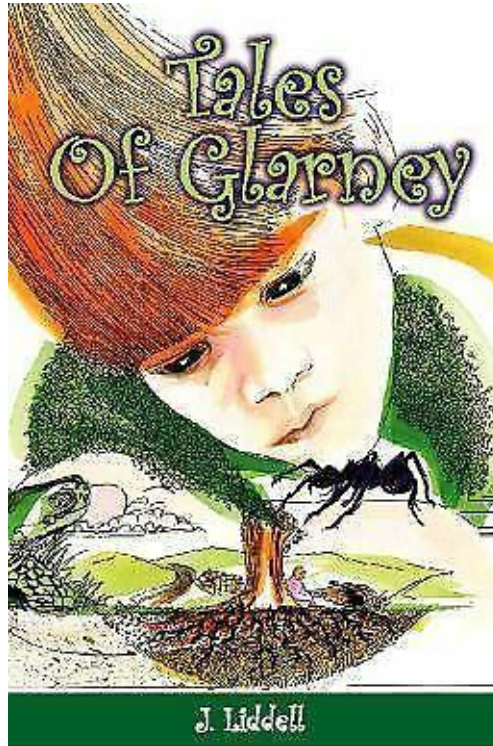


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Tales of Glarney

Julie Liddell

Introduction

Tales of Glarney was written by Julie Liddell and published by Trafford Publishing in 2003. This was Julie's first novel, and she has since published another novel as well as multiple travel articles. Julie uses her background in teaching and counseling to help children understand and deal with their emotions through the fantasy worlds she creates and immerses them in.

Summary

Simon wants to become a famous entomologist and is always collecting and keeping insects, much to the displeasure of his Aunt Emma who took him in after the death of his mother when he was three. When Simon's insects upset Aunt Em, Simon is sent to his room for the day and in his anger, he decides to sneak out. When Simon follows some ants into a hollow log, he winds up transported to the Kingdom of Glarney and is shrunk down to the size of the ants he was following. Simon learns from the ants that the Oggentots (AKA the ants) are hunted by the Truids (AKA the dwarves) from the neighboring land of Creosote as their king, Nefarious, delights in covering the ants in chocolate and eating them. The ants tell Simon about their plot to capture King Nefarious without the help of their queen, Marmal, who they feel is self-centered, lazy, and not doing her job of protecting them. Simon decides to be adventurous and try to help the ants and heads off to the queen's castle despite the warnings of danger from the ants.

Simon meets Topples, a clumsy ant who is the expert in Glarney on the Truids and tasked with helping find a way to deal with them by the Queen and her advisor. While consulting Quincy, Topples' turtle friend, for help, Topples gets kidnapped by some Truids. The real adventure has now begun for Simon. He must sneak in to Creosote to help rescue Topples so they can save the ants. He is successful in breaking Topples free, but they are split up and both face challenges making their way back to Glarney. When Simon finally makes it safely back, he realizes that Topples must still be stuck in Creosote, and once again must go back and rescue him and try to put an end to King Nefarious' rule to save the ants before it is too late.

Discussion Guide

1. When Simon first meets the ants, they tell him there is a warning about him because he

collects them and keeps them in jars. How do you think you would feel if you were in Simon's place when the ants told him that? Do you think this is why Simon decided to let all his insects free after his adventure was over? Would you have made the same choice Simon did? Why or why not?

2. At the beginning of the book, Simon says that his Aunt does not understand insects no matter how much he tells her about them. Have you ever tried to convince someone that they should care about something you care for deeply to no avail? How did it make you feel, or how do you think you would feel in this situation?
3. Who is in charge of the Oggentots in the story? Who are the main helpers to the leader of the Oggentots? How is the Oggentot society similar and different to social structure in a real ant colony? Do you think the story would have worked if the author had built her ant society strictly based on the social structure of a real ant colony? Why or why not?
4. The ants were portrayed as the good guys in the story. Do you feel differently about ants after reading the story? Why or why not?
5. At the end of the book, Simon and Topple are rewarded for their ant-like teamwork by the queen. Do you think that the ants throughout the story were working as a good team? How or how not were they being good teammates? Do you think the ants will work better as a team from now on?
6. The jackal Simon runs into in the beginning of the book tells Simon to trust his instincts after putting a protection spell on his mother's charm and giving him a piece of amber. What do you think trusting your instincts means? Have you ever been in a circumstance where you followed your instincts and if so, were your instincts correct? Do you think that your instincts can get better, and if so how?

7. The turtle tells Topple that “fear is always drawn to those who choose to carry it with them.” What do you think the turtle meant by this? Do you think that this is true? Why or why not? Can you think of a time when you were fearful and things seemed more frightening than they really were? For example, have you gone out at night when you are not used to being outside in the dark and sounds and shadows seemed scary, then you later found out what they really were and realized that they were not scary at all?
8. Simon, towards the end of the book, reveals that his mother was an entomologist. Do you think his interest in entomology helps him to feel more connected with his mother? Do you think that Aunt Em’s suggestion of going to see the insect exhibit at the end of the story is her way of trying to find a mutual connect with both Simon and her sister?
9. The serpent tells Simon that he can immediately gain wisdom if he eats one of the three fruits from a tree. How would you define wisdom? Do you think wisdom is as easy to acquire as the serpent is suggesting? Do you think Simon gained some wisdom in this part of the story? Are there other points in the story where Simon gains wisdom?

Bibliography

Liddell, J. (2003). *Tales of Glarney*. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing