

From the Author's Desk:

Hello Parents and Teachers! Thank you for sharing "The Secret of the Junkyard Shadow" with your readers. It's sixth in the Cabin Creek Mystery series. I hope this discussion guide will help them reflect on the story and enjoy it on a deeper level. I've added a lunch idea, a few random activities, and personal tidbits that might be fun for them.

*My very best,
Kristi*

Cabin Creek #6: The Secret of the Junkyard Shadow

About this book:

The cousins are worried there might be another thief in Cabin Creek. Things keep disappearing but then they show up again, repaired and freshly painted. Does the shadowy figure they've seen in the junkyard have the answer to this latest mystery?

Illustrated by Cody Ruttly. For ages 8-12.

ISBN 9781505672305

Discussion ideas:

<> Part I: [Chapter 1-8]

1. Name three things you'd like to find in a junkyard, and why.
2. Describe a broken item in your home that you could fix.
3. What do you think about Jeff and David borrowing Sophie's bike without permission?

<> Part II: [Chapter 9-16]

1. What does Mr. Wellback mean by doing good "without tooting your own horn?"
2. Discuss some useful things you could donate to someone in need.
3. What do you think about bartering?

Activity suggestions:

<> Write - These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I could secretly do a good deed I would ..."
2. Describe your favorite place to eat lunch and why.
3. Tell about a nice surprise.

<> Draw

1. A parrot, a cat, or a raccoon
2. A child's toy
3. A junkyard

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of the Western Cafe
2. Tool box

<> **Cook**

Mr. Wellback's Special Lunch -- This is one of my favorite meals: quick, nourishing, and easy to make with a friend. Serves two.

Ingredients:

- 2 medium potatoes (Russet or Idaho)
- 4 eggs
- 2 teaspoons butter
- 2 tablespoon water (milk or cream is an option)
- Salt & pepper
- Salsa (optional)
- Applesauce

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1. Wash potatoes. Pat dry with paper towel. Rub a little olive oil on the skin then sprinkle with salt & pepper. Put on microwaveable plate. It's **very important** to prick with a fork on all sides to let the steam escape, so they don't explode while cooking.

2. Times vary in microwaves so start with 8 minutes, turn them over so they'll cook evenly, then cook for several more minutes, checking now and then for softness. If the fork goes in easily, but the center is a little firm, it's ready. Let potatoes rest for five minutes to allow their middles to finish cooking from the heat trapped inside.

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3. Meanwhile, crack two eggs per person into a bowl. Add one tablespoon of water per egg (milk or cream is an option) so they'll be moist and less likely to get rubbery. Beat vigorously until blended.

5. Heat a pat of butter (2 teaspoons) in a frying pan. Move the pan by its handle, so that the melting butter slides around and coats the entire pan.

6. With your fingers dribble some water on the pan to test the heat. When tiny drops sizzle and evaporate, the pan is hot enough to pour in the eggs (keep whisking the mixture as you pour into the pan). Set the burner on low.

7. Watch the eggs cook. Don't get distracted! As soon they start solidifying, use a spatula to scrape the cooked part from the bottom to the top and expose the still-wet portions to the heat. This keeps the eggs from getting a leathery brown skin on the bottom.

8. When they're almost done remove from the heat, otherwise the hot pan will keep cooking them (but if you prefer drier eggs, leave them on the heat as needed). They're ready to serve when there's no liquid left in the pan.

9. Now cut your potatoes open and top with these delicious scrambled eggs. Add salsa if you like a little pizzazz. Serve with a soothing dish of applesauce.

<> **Read** - Cabin Creek Mysteries # 7: The Phantom of Hidden Horse Ranch
ISBN 9781505450859

Behind the scenes of this story:

One December night when I was about eight, my siblings and I woke to a *clunk*. Our open window brought the familiar sounds of the surf and foghorn, but this noise was new. It was almost Christmas. "Maybe Santa came early," we whispered. With our parents still asleep we crept out to the living room to investigate.

Santa *had* been there. But instead of toys, he left behind a bunch of black boxes in various shapes. We unsnapped the lids, surprised to find a shiny musical instrument in each, nestled in blue velvet: a trumpet, trombone, flute, clarinet, and a saxophone. As it turns out, a musician from a beach jazz club had volunteered to deliver the equipment to a friend's home. It had been late and dark. He'd forgotten the address, but when he saw the cottage with the bright porch light and found the front door unlocked, he figured he was at the right place.

This scene from childhood gave me the idea for the *Junkyard Shadow*, where a mysterious surprise shows up on someone's doorstep.

A secret about the author:

I love to explore second-hand stores and yard sales. Our house is full of useful treasures that have a "story" behind them.

Contact: I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, kristianagregory.com, and I'll answer you!