



Margaret Ferguson Books
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Salt Magic

by Hope Larson

illustrated by Rebecca Mock

ABOUT THE BOOK

When a jealous witch curses her family's well, it's up to Vonceil to set things right in an epic journey that will leave her changed forever.

When Vonceil's older brother, Elber, comes home to their family's Oklahoma farm after serving on the front lines of World War I, things aren't what she expects. His experiences have changed him into a serious and responsible man who doesn't have time for Vonceil anymore. He even marries the girl he had left behind.

Then a mysterious and captivating woman shows up at the farm and confronts Elber for tossing her aside

after she saved his life in France her in France. When he refuses to leave his wife, she puts a curse on the family well, turning the entire town's water supply into saltwater. Who is this lady dressed all in white, what has she done to the farm, and what does Vonceil's old uncle Dell know about her?

To find out, Vonceil will have to strike out on her own and delve deep into the world of witchcraft, confronting dangerous relatives, shapeshifting animals, a capricious Sugar Witch, and the Lady in White herself—the foreboding Salt Witch. The journey will change Vonceil, but along the way she'll learn a lot about love and what it means to grow up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe life in Gypsum, Oklahoma in 1919. What is the role of the illustrations in revealing the setting? How did the people dress? What was farm life like? Contrast the soddy and the Taggart's farmhouse. What does the setting reveal about the role of women during this time?
- What is Elber's homecoming like? He gives a ring to Amelia, his boyhood sweetheart. Contrast Vonceil's reaction to Elber's action to that of the rest of her family.
- Vonceil described Elber and Amelia as "mismatched like a pepper mill and a sugar bowl" (p. 9). What are Vonceil's fantasies about the kind of girl she wants Elber to marry?

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- How is the conflict of the novel revealed on the first page (p. 8)? What are some of the key illustrations that reveal the conflict?
- Describe Vonceil's relationship with Elber. Why doesn't she understand the changes in him?
- Discuss what Elber means when he tells Vonceil, "But some wounds aren't easy to see" (p. 21). How do the changes in Elber after the war mirror the mental health struggles some soldiers suffer after their time in the military? How does he need the love of his family to deal with his physical and mental wounds?
- Discuss the conversation that Flo and Ida have about Amelia (p. 17). What does "steady" mean? How is a "steady" girl the kind of wife needed for a farmer in the early 1900s?
- Explain what Vonceil means when she says, "She [Amelia] has made him ordinary" (p. 24). What is a scapegoat? How does Vonceil turn Amelia into a scapegoat? How does Vonceil overstep boundaries by entering Elber and Amelia's soddy without permission? Does Vonceil really dislike Amelia or is she simply jealous of her relationship with Elber? At what point does Vonceil recognize "spirit" and "grit" in Amelia?
- Describe Elber and Amelia's wedding. Who is Old Dell? How does Old Dell's appearance at the wedding tie into his role later in the novel? How does the family react when he interrupts the wedding? Who is Fred?
- Debate whether Old Dell is the villain that he appears to be. How does Old Dell's proclamation that Greda is a witch foreshadow later events in the story?
- Why does Vonceil take on the blame and responsibility of the curse? Why might she feel like it is her fault? Is it?
- Do you think Greda is a villain or an enemy? What is the difference? Is magic evil in the story or does it represent something else? Explain how magic creates conflict.
- How does the fantasy contribute to the resolution of the overall conflict of the story?
- Look at the illustration on each chapter title page. How does the illustration provide a visual introduction to the chapter?
- How is color used to reflect Vonceil's feelings? Explain how color represents something unknown to Vonceil.
- What is the purpose of the Epilogue? Explain what Vonceil reveals about love, sacrifice, and family.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Hope Larson has written and illustrated many graphic novels including *All Summer Long*, which was a *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book and an Eisner Award nominee, as well as its sequel, *All Together Now*. She adapted and illustrated *A Wrinkle in Time: The Graphic Novel*, which spent forty-four weeks on the *New York Times* graphic novel bestseller list and for which she won an Eisner Award. She is also the author of *Compass South* (a *New York Times* bestseller), and its companion volume, *Knife's Edge*, both illustrated by Rebecca Mock. She lives in North Carolina.

Rebecca Mock is a *New York Times* best-selling illustrator and comics artist. They illustrated the graphic novels *Compass South*, *Knife's Edge*, and *Salt Magic*, written by Hope Larson, and their artwork can be found in newspapers, cartoons, books, commercials and video games. Rebecca lives in Brooklyn, New York. Visit their website at rebeccamock.com.

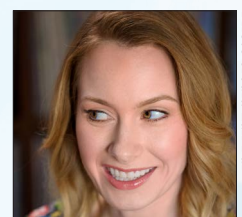


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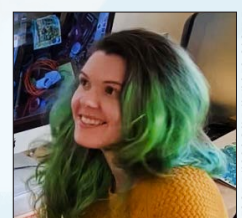


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