



Leaving the Log House **Ainslie Manson**

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The Story

Far from home, Teresa stays with relatives in the big city, where she spends her days at the hospital, preparing to walk on her first prosthetic leg. Her teenage brother, Tom, stays with her for the first weekend. To her surprise, he joins her in playing elaborate games with two old dolls named Tape and Curly. Tom leaves to work on a nearby farm and Teresa is bereft, even more so when he doesn't call or answer her letters. When she finally reaches out to him, she ends up pushing him farther away.

In the end, Teresa makes a brave journey to face her brother and reconnect. In doing so, she discovers her own strength and independence.

The Author

Leaving the Log House is Ainslie Manson's tenth book for children and her second novel. The dolls in the story, Tape and Curly, are based on real dolls that Ainslie was given as a child. She is also the author of *House Calls: The true story of a pioneer doctor* (Groundwood, 2001) and *Ballerinas Don't Wear Glasses* (Orca, 2000). Ainslie lives and writes in West Vancouver overlooking the sea.

The Ideas

- Write several journal entries from the point of view of Tom or of one of the other children at the hospital.
- Imagine that the children at the hospital write to Teresa after she has gone home. In pairs where one of you is Teresa and the other is a child at the hospital, write letters back and forth. How does the skating go? Is Tom impressed with what Teresa has learned? What do the children at the hospital do with the log house?
- The dolls are made of Bakelite. See what you can find out about that material. Does anyone in your class have something made of Bakelite at home? Perhaps your parents or your grandparents have kept an old toy. See if you can borrow it to bring to show.

- A lot of information is presented in the story about prosthetics. Were you surprised by anything that you learned? Would you like to learn anything else? You might want to do some research. If you needed a prosthesis, what pattern might you like on it?
- What do the butterflies in the story mean to you? Write or illustrate your thoughts. You could create a huge butterfly mural in your classroom and display your work on it.
- Tom tells Teresa a story about what happens to Tape. Write your own story, sending Tape on an amazing journey. Where does he end up?
- Choose a scene in the story to dramatize or to produce as a radio play or as readers' theatre. The scene between Teresa and Tom in the school office might be one good choice.
- Learning to walk with a prosthetic leg is a challenge. So is living away from home for months when you are a kid. And so is coping with a very angry brother. Think about challenges you have faced in your life or imagine a challenge that you might face in the future and write a story or create a storyboard about how you overcome it.
- Discuss what the title *Leaving the Log House* means to you.

You Might Also Enjoy

In the Clear by Anne Laurel Carter (Orca, 2001), a historical juvenile novel about a girl who uses a wheelchair because of polio. She dreams of playing hockey and eventually is able to realize her dream.

Seeds Of Time by K. C. Dyer (University of Toronto Press, 2002), a time travel novel about a thirteen-year-old girl who loses a leg in an accident that kills her father.

Birdie for Now by Jean Little (Orca, 2001), a Young Reader about a boy who suffers from ADHD. He desperately wants a dog and ends up training a small abused Papillon despite his mother's terror of dogs.

Baboo by Ainslie Manson. (Groundwood, 1998), a picture book about Sir John A. Macdonald's handicapped daughter, Mary. Illustrated by Bill Wand.

A Complete List of Ainslie Manson's Books

Leaving the Log House (Orca, 2003) Story of a young girl who flies down to the city from the north to get a new leg and learn how to walk with it. Early chapter book for 7-13 year olds.

Alexander Mackenzie, From Canada by Land (Groundwood, 2003) Biography of Mackenzie.

House Calls, The true story of a pioneer doctor (Groundwood, 2001) Illustrated by Mary Ann Gerber. Historical Fiction.

Ballerinas Don't Wear Glasses (Orca, 2000) Illustrations by Dean Griffiths. Fiction, picture book.

Baboo (Groundwood, 1998) Illustrated by Bill Wand. The story of Sir John A. Macdonald's daughter. Picture book.

Just Like New (Groundwood, 1995) Illustrated by Karen Reczuch. Fiction, picture book.

A Dog Came, Too (Groundwood, 1992) Illustrated by Ann Blades. Story of the dog that crossed Canada with Alexander Mackenzie.

Now Out of Print

Simon Fraser (Grolier, 1991, for Canadian Pathfinders Series)

Alexander Mackenzie (Grolier, 1991, for Canadian Pathfinders Series)

Mr. McUmphie of Caulfield Cove (Queenston House, 1982)

A Few Words from the Author

Dear Readers:

The first tiny germ of an idea that started this book growing came to me one morning when I was walking my dogs. Dog walking time is good thinking time for me. Did a plane fly over and start the ball rolling? I'm not sure, but I was landed with a "mental picture" of a little girl on a plane flying down to Vancouver from somewhere in the northern part of the province. I didn't know what was wrong with her, but I knew she was scared, and was going to a hospital. For what reason? I had to figure that part out!

Eventually I "discovered" that she had lost a leg. She was going to the hospital to get a prosthesis. Prosthesis?? I had a lot of research to do! I visited with a company who made legs and had lots of young patients. They explained to me the different steps one goes through when having a prosthetic leg made. This really got me started and helped me understand what Teresa would have to go through.

Later I met with two physiotherapists. They were amazing! They showed me around and answered all my questions. For instance, would Teresa really be able to learn to skate? They agreed to keep in touch by email and I asked them many more questions as the book grew.

Where did the idea for the dolls come from? Long, long ago I had two dolls just like Tape and Curly. They looked exactly as I've described them in the story. My brother Kim (perhaps on a day when he had no friends around to play with) agreed to play with me... and Tape and Curly. I hate to admit it, but I did send Tape to my poor brother at his school because I thought he might be lonely. He had a hard time understanding and forgiving me for that one!

Sincerely,
Ainslie Manson