

GULLYWASHER GULCH: DISCUSSION IDEAS

by Marianne Mitchell

THEMES

- Share your wealth and experience
- Work together to help each other
- Keep an open mind

COMMUNITY

The main character in *Gullywasher Gulch* is Ebenezer Overall. His first name is borrowed from the Charles Dickens character, Ebenezer Scrooge, a man who did not like to share his wealth.

- Discuss how Ebenezer Overall proves that he wants to share his wealth with the town and not keep it all for himself.

Eb also likes to save things in and around his house. His sister calls him a 'pack rat'.

- How is old Eb like a pack rat?
- What kinds of things does Eb save?
- What things do you like to save?
- Why do you save them?

The gullywasher storm destroys the town of Dry Gulch. At first, the people think they're ruined.

- But what do they do when Miranda finds gold in the mud?
- Can they use Eb's stuff to rebuild the town?
- How will they work together to build the new town?
- What will be the name of the new town?

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

- Does the desert get much rain?
- What can happen to the environment if the desert gets too little rain?
- What can happen if it gets too much rain all at once?
- What are some ways desert dwellers can save water?

Ebenezer Overall is a prospector.

- What does a prospector do?
- What effect do you think mining for gold has on the environment?
- Have you been to a mining camp or gold mine?

ILLUSTRATION

The artist, Normand Chartier, has put lots of action and movement in his illustrations.

- What things look like they're moving on the page?
- If you drew a picture, what technique would you use to show movement?

ANIMALS

There are many desert animals shown in the illustrations.

- Can you name them?
- Which one is your favorite?

One animal mentioned in the story is a 'jackalope.'

- Have you ever seen a jackalope?
- Do they really exist?

WORD CHOICE & VOICE

In many ways, this story is a "tall tale." The author has used hyperbole to emphasize the hot, desert setting.

- What are some exaggerations used to describe the desert that summer?
- What does Eb mean when he says he's "saving for a rainy day"?
- Does it really have to rain for you to spend your 'savings'?

Eb thinks he won't need his buried gold for a while 'since rain was as scarce as a jackalope.'

- Why does he think that way?

The author chose some unusual words for this story to make it sound western and fun. For example, *gullywasher*, *gulch*, and *hightailed*.

- What words would you use to describe a big rain storm?
- What are some of the unusual action words in the story?

DISASTER RELIEF

Gullywasher Gulch is a fictional story about a disaster. Students may want to talk about the devastation from Hurricane Katrina or the 2004 tsunami in south Asia.

Gullywasher Gulch offers an opportunity to discuss how natural disasters can affect communities and how people come together afterwards to provide relief.

Discuss ways that students can help with disaster relief or ways they can help others in their own communities on an everyday basis.