Teaching Ideas

_The 13 Treasures_ is the story of Tanya, a girl who has the unusual ability to see fairies. But growing up with this kind of secret isn’t easy, especially when many fairies are far from friendly. When Tanya prepares to spend a miserable summer in her grandmother’s fairy-infested house, she thinks the magical creatures and Fabian, the caretaker’s annoying son, will be her biggest problems — until she stumbles on the mystery of a missing local girl. Solving the disappearance could prove a man’s innocence . . . but it will also put Tanya’s life at stake.

This story is probably best suited to readers aged 8-12, depending on ability. There is plenty of scope for it to be used in a classroom, particularly to inspire imagination and atmospheric writing, as well as the study of folklore and superstition. Here are some suggestions:

**Pre-reading discussion:**

1. When you hear the word ‘fairies’ what comes to mind? What kind of associations and beliefs are held about them?
2. Research three artists who have drawn or painted fairies. Whose work is your favourite, and why?
3. What superstitions are there about the number 13?
4. From the cover alone, what genre do you think this book is? (Mystery, adventure, fantasy) or a mixture?
5. Can you think of any other books about fairies? What are you expecting from this one?

**Comprehension:**

1. What do you think the purpose of the prologue is?
2. From whose point of view is most of the story written? How does this affect the way the story is told and how you feel about the characters?
3. What do you learn at the start about Tanya’s relationship with her mother and her family?
4. Can you identify any themes running through the story? Does it deal with family, friendship or revenge?
5. Does Tanya discover why she can see fairies when others can't? What are the reasons behind this?
6. How does Tanya’s grandmother treat her? When you discover her reasons do you forgive her, or think she should have behaved differently?
7. What does Tanya think of Red when she meets her in the tunnel? How do her feelings change as she listens to her story?
8. What was your opinion on fairies before you read this book? Did it change?

Cover illustration © Melissa Castrillon
Activities:

1. Create a diary entry for Tanya on the day she meets the goblins.
2. Rewrite the scene where Tanya meets Red for the first time, but from Red’s point of view. What would she be thinking/feeling?
3. Write a diary entry for Elizabeth Elvesden – taking into account the time she lived in.
4. Think of three questions you would like to ask the goblins and write them down in rhyme.
5. Look at the blurb on the back of the book and write your own version. How could you do it differently?
6. Draw one of the fairy characters in the story, or make up your own fairy. What does it look like, where does it live?
7. Make a list of your own treasures (it doesn’t have to be 13). Do they have magical powers?
8. Write a newspaper article about Red’s baby-stealing activities. Look at real news articles to help you.

Research:

1. List three beliefs/superstitions about fairies.
2. Find out another way you can protect yourself from fairies that isn’t mentioned in the book.
3. Are there any real life examples of people who were believed to be changelings? When was this, and what happened to them?
4. Find three reasons why women who were not mad could be locked up in asylums in the 19th century.
5. Look up the Cottingley Fairies. Which famous person believed the story to be true? How are the stories of the two girls involved different?

Other relevant stories:

- *In Darkling Wood* by Emma Carroll
- *The Secret of Nightingale Wood* by Lucy Strange
- *The House with Chicken Legs* by Sophie Anderson
- *The Dream Snatcher* by Abi Elphinstone
- *The Secret Starling* by Judith Eagle

The 13 Treasures by Michelle Harrison
Published by Simon & Schuster
Cover Illustration © Melissa Castrillón
Paperback | £6.99 | 978-1-4711-8324-9

Cover illustration © Melissa Castrillon