



Longwood Gardens

The Magic Shrub

Letter from the Author

To future plant hunters, green-thumbers, and nature lovers:

My name is Eileen Maroney and I have been involved with Longwood Gardens for many years. I remember visiting the gardens when I was your age. The Christmas lights were the best! I also remember the warm, moist air in the conservatories, the bright colorful flowers and the dense sweet smells. I remember standing on the large grates inside and feeling the heat come up from the dark tunnels below. It was always so special to come for a visit.

Gardens do not have to be big like Longwood, but can be small places where you can connect with the earth. As a child, I remember being close to nature by playing in the woods and gardens at my grandparents' home, and by planting a garden with my father. We planted lettuce, tomatoes, sweet corn, and zinnia flowers for my mother.

After traveling and visiting many great gardens, I started taking classes here at Longwood and studied plants. And one of my favorite classes was on trees. While completing my classes, I shared the gardens with many students. And let me tell you, the gardens are the best classroom ever! Longwood was built to be a public garden, a place to share with friends and family, and you. It is a place in the community for all to enjoy, be inspired by, and learn about plants. Having enjoyed the gardens so much, I decided to write a book. I had a story to tell.

The main character in this book is Sam, and Sam is based on each and every one of you. He is a little bit like each of the students who come to Longwood with their class or their family. I hope you enjoy this story and that someday you get to visit Longwood and be inspired.

Have fun plant hunting in the gardens and beyond!

Eileen Maroney

Eileen Maroney

Synopsis

Ten-year-old Sam knows a lot about plants, and more than he cares to know about bullies. When he learns in the fall of 1906 that the property next to his home has been sold and the woods where he has played all his life are in jeopardy, he sets out to learn more. Sam teaches his new neighbor about the land and the trees. In return the man shares his vision for a garden and along the way helps Sam win over some



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new friends. In this fictional story, the two share a respect for history, the magic found in nature, the vision of a garden, and a friendship that is timeless.

The setting of the book is Longwood Gardens which was created by industrialist Pierre Samuel du Pont (1870-1954) who purchased the property in 1906 to preserve the Peirce Arboretum. Today Longwood, located near Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, comprises 1,050 acres including 4 acres under glass. Longwood is dedicated to preserving the spirit and the beauty of the early twentieth century gardens of Pierre S. du Pont. Longwood is a display garden promoting the art and enjoyment of horticulture for the public, while providing opportunities for research and learning.

Meet the Author

Eileen Maroney has been involved with Longwood Gardens in numerous capacities for many years and has shared the gardens with many school children. She has a B.A. from the University of Delaware in Art History, has completed both Certificates of Merit in Ornamental Plants from Longwood, and is a graduate of the Arboretum School of the Barnes Foundation. She lives in Delaware. This is her first book.

Meet the Illustrator

Lauren Goldstein has been drawing since she was a young child and has won several local awards for her artwork in New Jersey and Delaware. Since discovering painting, she has completed a temporary mural for the Children's Museum in Boston, and two small pieces for the Longwood Gardens Shop. In 2007, she will create a wall mural for Longwood's new indoor Children's Garden. As Longwood's Display Specialist, Lauren gets to "paint with flowers" every day as she designs the seasonal plantings featured in the Conservatory and along the Flower Garden Walk.

Excerpt From Book

Sam inched his way along the limb of the tree. The smooth gray bark of the beech tree looked like elephant skin. Some of the other trees had ridges in the bark and were easier to grip, but the beech tree was his favorite to climb because of the low branches. The trunk resembled an elephant's foot with its baggy wrinkled hide at the ankles. Its leaves turned tan and remained on the tree for part of the winter, making it a good tree in which to seek shelter.

Sam would use it to hide from some of the town kids who liked to bully him. There was really only one bully, but when he got together with his friends, they formed an intimidating group. They told Sam he was only ten years old and he was too young to play with them. They teased him because he knew a lot about plants, which the boys thought was boring. Having grown up on one of the many farms in the area, Sam was interested in nature and the trees.



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Creeping out further in the low limb, Sam could just barely get a glimpse of two men talking near the corner of a house. He had heard a rumor that a sawmill owner was going to cut down the trees and he had come to investigate. They appeared to be businessmen in dark suits and hats. They were shaking hands. He could hear their voices, but he could not make out what it was they were saying. If he could just lean a little bit closer, he might be able to....

Biographical Info for P.S. du Pont

Pierre S. du Pont was one of the most important industrialists and philanthropists of the 20th century. Born in 1870 near Wilmington, Delaware he attended school in Philadelphia then college at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he studied chemistry. He worked for the DuPont chemical company, where he rose to the top leadership position as Chairman of the Board. He also became Chairman of General Motors, the automobile manufacturer. Mr. du Pont was an innovative thinker who supported many causes, especially in the field of education.

Mr. du Pont always loved gardens and gardening, so it is not surprising that he purchased the 202-acre Peirce farm near Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, in 1906. The property had an historic 15-acre arboretum, or tree park, with huge trees that had been planted as early as 1800 by a Quaker family named Peirce. They had planted the trees simply for beauty and for the study of natural history. But Peirce descendants sold the farm, and the trees were to be cut down for timber. Mr. du Pont bought the property to save the trees. Over the next 48 years he created Longwood Gardens, one of the finest public gardens in the world. As a philanthropist, not only did he give us Longwood, but he also donated generously to many charitable causes. He built 120 public schools in Delaware and Pennsylvania, and helped to build hospitals and roads.

Pierre S. du Pont ensured that after his death in 1954 Longwood Gardens would continue. More than 40 million visitors from all over the world have enjoyed his horticultural legacy, including thousands that have participated in Longwood's educational programs. Longwood Gardens proves to be his greatest gift to all that share in its history and beauty.

Before Reading

- Set up a "Being There" Corner with poster, plants, tree/flower books, Longwood materials, nature tape to set the stage for introducing book.
- Assess prior knowledge about gardens, trees, plants, Longwood and record on a KWL chart.
- Build background for the story by discussing vocabulary, i.e., arboretum, deciduous, conifer, annual, perennial, philanthropist, horticulture, public garden, industrialist, inspiration.
- Explore the characteristics of the genre of historical fiction.
- Visit the Longwood website (www.longwoodgardens.org) for an overview of the gardens, history and programs.



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While Reading

- Encourage students to visualize story events as they unfold.
- Promote ongoing interaction with the text by having students ask who, what, where, when, how and why questions about text and illustrations.
- Assign students to write their story reflections in a journal.
- Pause throughout the story and have students make predictions about the plot (ex. Garden Party).
- Invite students to add story-related objects to the “Being There” Table as the story progresses.

After Reading

- Organize cooperative groups for interpreting the story through skit/play, role-playing, storytelling.
- Identify characters in the book and discuss what each learned in this story.
- Brainstorm poems, books, music that are connected in some way to the plot in The Magic Shrub.
- Schedule a landscaper as a guest speaker to discuss how gardens are planned and developed.
- Arrange and photograph a Longwood field trip to discover the locations mentioned in the story.

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts

- Use the language of text to develop vocabulary and language concepts i.e., phrases, conversation, synonyms/antonyms, parts of speech, etc.
- Introduce a story map so students can highlight story elements and plot action of events in the story.
- Utilize the story for literature study, interactive read-aloud, shared reading/writing, readers’ theatre, guided reading, independent reading, choral reading, writing workshop, book clubs, etc.
- Assign follow-up writing assignments: Examples:
 - 1) Pretend you are the bully in The Magic Shrub. Write a letter to Mr. du Pont to explain your reaction to the Garden Party and how you might have been changed by the event.
 - 2) First research and then write a biographical article on the life of Pierre S. du Pont.
 - 3) Write a sequel to this story based upon clues given by the book’s author.

Mathematics/Science

- Assign research teams to identify, research and report on local trees by creatively sharing their identifying characteristics.
- Encourage students to design and share their own gardens through illustration/models.
- Arrange for a visit to a local nursery to investigate trees well suited to your growing zone for planting on Arbor Day.
- Develop/graph a plan for a garden at the school site and share the finished garden with other classes/individuals.



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Social Studies

- Discuss how the life skills of trustworthiness, truthfulness, active listening, no put-downs and personal best were revealed in The Magic Shrub.
- Assign students to use the book's map as a model for designing their own garden.
- Discuss the issue of bullying and identify ways of effectively dealing with bullying.
- Research the Longwood's property in order to establish a class timeline reflecting the history.
- Set up interviews with individuals making a difference in the local community in order to identify their vision as well as the actions they have taken to make the community a better place.

Arts

- Allow students to creatively interpret story through art, drama and/or music.
- Encourage students to write and perform a short play involving conservation.
- Provide students with an opportunity to present photographic essays on trees, plants, Longwood.
- Allow students to search for art-related products that help to tell the story of The Magic Shrub.

Extensions for Students

- Investigate environmental organizations that are working to preserve/conserve trees.
- Identify and visit arboretums in the region.
- Investigate careers associated with the operation of Longwood Gardens.
- Find areas in the community that need to be protected/preserved.
- Plan a garden party for friends/other classes.
- Design a magic shrub to surprise friends and family.

Resources (available at the Longwood Gardens Gift Shop)

- www.longwoodgardens.org
- Gardenopoly Game
- Longwood Gardens Videotapes and CD's
- Longwood Gardens Children's Activity Book
- Nature-related Children's Books, Puzzles, Kits
- Flower, Plant and Tree Books/Guides
- The Heritage of Longwood Gardens (paperback)
- The Planning Vision of Longwood Gardens (paperback)
- Plant Exploration for Longwood Gardens (hardback)
- Tulip Trees and Quaker Gentlemen (paperback)
- Longwood Gardens (hardback/paperback)
- Longwood Gardens: The First Hundred Years (hardback)/DVD
- The Centennial Map and Guide/Longwood Gardens Children's Map



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Activity Sheets

- The Magic Shrub Word Search
- Design Your Own Map
- Leaf Matching Coloring Sheet
- The Magic Shrub KWL Sheet
- Definition Guide