

JENNY PHILLIPS

The
clockmaker's
Son




The **Good** AND THE *Beautiful*
CURRICULUM

For use with the Level 5 Language Arts course

Contents

Chapter 1	1
Chapter 2	12
Chapter 3	22
Chapter 4	32
Chapter 5	42
Chapter 6	51
Chapter 7	60
Chapter 8	69
Chapter 9	78
Chapter 10	90
Chapter 11	99
Chapter 12	111
Chapter 13	119
Chapter 14	125
Chapter 15	132
Chapter 16	143
Chapter 17	148
Chapter 18	154
Chapter 19	160
Chapter 20	169
Chapter 21	176
Chapter 22	184



CHAPTER 1

Tucked deep into the Black Forest of Germany beside a small gurgling stream was a little schoolhouse filled with the thoughts of twenty-nine children. However, the only sound to be heard within the walls was the young schoolmaster's voice.

“Right here, right now, in our valley of Gutach, walking our beautiful hills and forests, is the famous artist Karl Hofer.”

Famous! thought Fritz Vogel. That word was often on his fourteen-year-old mind, for Fritz had a secret determination that he would one day leave this isolated forest and be someone great, someone important. He could never decide what exactly he would be famous for, but now he had a new idea—an artist. Perhaps he would be a famous artist!

Fritz focused his attention back on the schoolmaster's words. "Karl Hofer, as many of you know, achieved wonderful success last year with his paintings of our very own Black Forest. Now he is here to find more scenes of the Black Forest to paint."

Fritz glanced at his brother, Peter, who was just a year and a half older. Peter, as usual, was listening intently to the schoolmaster. Fritz wanted Peter to know how excited he was. With a little jab in the ribs, Fritz poked his brother several times. But Peter didn't take his eyes off the schoolmaster, for it was against the rules not to pay strict attention to the schoolmaster at all times.

"Karl Hofer has studied with some of the great masters of our day," continued the schoolmaster with enthusiasm. "He has traveled the world. Imagine what he has seen in the great cities of France and Italy!"

Suddenly, there was a little squeal from the back of the room, then the scrape of a chair and the patter of little feet.

"Gretchen Vogel!" said the schoolmaster sternly. "What are you doing?"

"Look! It's a red crossbill bird!" cried Fritz's seven-year-old sister as she stuck her head out

the open window. “It’s on the branch over there. Father showed me one once, and I’ve never seen one again until now. Oh, just look how pretty it is.”

Peter was aghast at Gretchen’s actions, but Fritz was amused, as was his twin sister, Elsie. Amalia and Agatha, the other Vogel siblings, also twins, hardly dared to breathe as they watched the schoolmaster’s flustered face. He walked over to Gretchen and folded his arms.

“Gretchen Vogel, I’m aware of your great love of birds, and, yes, a red crossbill is quite worthy of notice, but it is not appropriate to get up in the middle of school and disrupt my teaching. You may stay after school for detention today, and”—he took a look at his pocket watch—“it’s time for school to end now. Gather your things, students. Class is dismissed.”

Fritz groaned quietly. All the Vogel children would have to wait for Gretchen.

Peter walked over to Gretchen and wiped away the two big tears sliding down her little cheeks. “We’ll be outside waiting for you, Gretchen. I really don’t think he will keep you long.”

The Vogel children gathered together outside by the school steps.

“Can you believe it?” said Fritz. “The one day

we have a chance to meet someone famous in our hills, Gretchen keeps us waiting for her.”

“I know you’re excited about Karl Hofer,” said Elsie kindly, always supportive of her twin brother, “but look at poor Gretchen.” She pointed into the schoolroom where they could all see Gretchen through the open schoolroom door. The little girl had tears streaming down her face.

Spared a long detention by the kind-hearted teacher, Gretchen came dashing out the door only five minutes later. Her yellow braids flying and her eyes blurry from all the tears, she tumbled right down the schoolhouse steps and landed in a little heap at the bottom.

Amalia and Agatha gasped.

“My foot!” sobbed Gretchen. “My elbow! Oh, I’m hurt.”

After a quick assessment from Elsie, Gretchen was found to be without serious harm, but she was definitely not able to make the very long walk home.

“Fritz and I will take turns carrying you,” declared Peter. He picked her up with strong arms. “It’s a good thing you’re light as a feather. Now, let’s see if we can find that red crossbill on the way home.”

“Peter,” said Fritz, as he followed his older



brother. "How *are* you so perfect?" he said sincerely. "Can I call you Perfect Peter?"

"Of course not," said Peter.

"Well, I don't know that I have ever seen you do anything wrong," stated Fritz. "Hotel Zum will be blessed to have you."

Peter didn't answer, but Fritz was used to Peter's quiet ways. He was not much of a talker.

"Well, I don't want you to go work at Hotel Zum," said Gretchen as she leaned into Peter's broad chest.

"He has to," said Elsie. "He's turning sixteen, and since he can't afford to go to university, he has to start earning money after the fall semester is over. He'll make a perfect front desk assistant, and he'll even be able to live in the hotel for free. It's really a great opportunity."

"Why can't he just stay with us and help Father on the farm?" asked Gretchen.

"No, the farm goes to the youngest son," replied Elsie. "Fritz will run the farm one day."

"I can't stand it any longer!" cried Fritz loudly. Everyone stopped and stared at him.

"Everyone has my life planned for me, but it's not *my* plan! I don't like the farm. I don't want it. It's too small. We can only produce a little more than what we need ourselves. That's why Father

has to make clocks all winter in his stuffy shop. I don't want to farm, and I don't want to make clocks all winter. I don't want to make *any* clocks. And I won't! I'm going to do something great. I'm going to leave our crowded little farm and travel to the great cities of the world. I'm going to be someone important. I'm going to be a painter like Karl Hofer. You'll see!"

Fritz turned on his heels and ran off the dirt road into the forest.

"Fritz! Where are you going?" yelled Peter.

"I'm going to find Karl Hofer," Fritz called over his shoulder.

"Fritz! Come back. You need to help me carry Gretchen home—and Father will need help with the chores."

There was no answer from Fritz. The siblings stood listening as the sounds of Fritz running in the forest grew fainter and then disappeared. Birds chirped cheerfully in the green canopy above them, but all else was still.

Agatha and Amalia, quite the tenderhearted nine-year-old girls, began to cry.

"Oh, Fritz!" cried Agatha, shaking her long light hair.

"What will happen?" cried Amalia, pulling on her long brown braids. "What will Father think?"

Oh, Fritz will break Father's heart."

"We can let Fritz tell Father about this; it should not come from us," said Peter solemnly, still staring off into the forest where Fritz had disappeared. "Fritz will need to work this out on his own." He set Gretchen down. "My arms just need a quick break, Gretchen, and then we can all head home."



It felt good to run. Many months of pent-up worries and conflicted feelings flowed through Fritz, sending him swiftly across the fields. Over the hills Fritz went, scanning the area for any sign of the famous artist. After stopping for a quick rest and a drink from a clear, bubbling stream, Fritz ran again. There was no sign of the artist. Fritz dashed into a thicket of trees and nearly ran into a cow. Dodging the cow made him topple head over heels, and he finally landed, unharmed, flat on the ground. He heard a deep chuckle.

"Trying to take out my cow, are you?" said a jovial voice.

Fritz looked up and saw a familiar-looking man, a neighboring farmer wearing a straw hat, looking down on him.

"So sorry," said Fritz. "I didn't see your cow."

“Obviously,” said the man. “What were you running so fast for?”

Fritz stood up. “I—I’m just looking for somebody.”

The farmer studied the boy’s face. “Oh, you live just over that hill, right? You are the clockmaker’s son.”

The clockmaker’s son! Will I always be known as just a clockmaker’s son? thought Fritz. *My name is Fritz Vogel, and I am more than a clockmaker’s son. Someday he’ll know my name.*

Fritz gave a slight nod and ran off.



The sinking sun was just disappearing behind the hills by the time Fritz practically stumbled into his farmhouse, exhausted from his fruitless search for Karl Hofer. The family had just begun dinner. With hesitation Fritz sat down at the table. All was quiet except for the scraping of wooden spoons in wooden bowls. Fritz’s usually blithe father, Jakob, somberly chewed on his piece of black bread. Then he looked up at Fritz with a twinkle in his eye and asked, “Did you find Karl Hofer?”

Fritz lowered his head. “No, Father. I’m really sorry. I should not have run off like that.”

“No, you shouldn’t have. Not only did Peter have to carry Gretchen home all by himself, but Peter also had to do all your chores. You know the cow has to be milked, and the vegetable garden is not going to water itself.”

“I know. I’m sorry. May I do extra work tomorrow?”

“You may,” said his father, dipping his spoon in his thick, steaming potato soup. “Thank you, Fritz.”

Fritz stole a glance at Peter and found him staring down at his soup. His mother was staring at her soup, too, as she held two-year-old Flora on her lap. Fritz then stole a glance at Gretchen. She was narrowing her eyes at him. Never had Fritz remembered feeling so terrible.

Just then, unfailingly supportive Elsie patted Fritz’s knee and gave him a smile.

Oh, good Elsie! thought Fritz.

Jakob cleared his throat. “Well, Fritz, do you want to tell me why you were so set on finding Karl Hofer?”

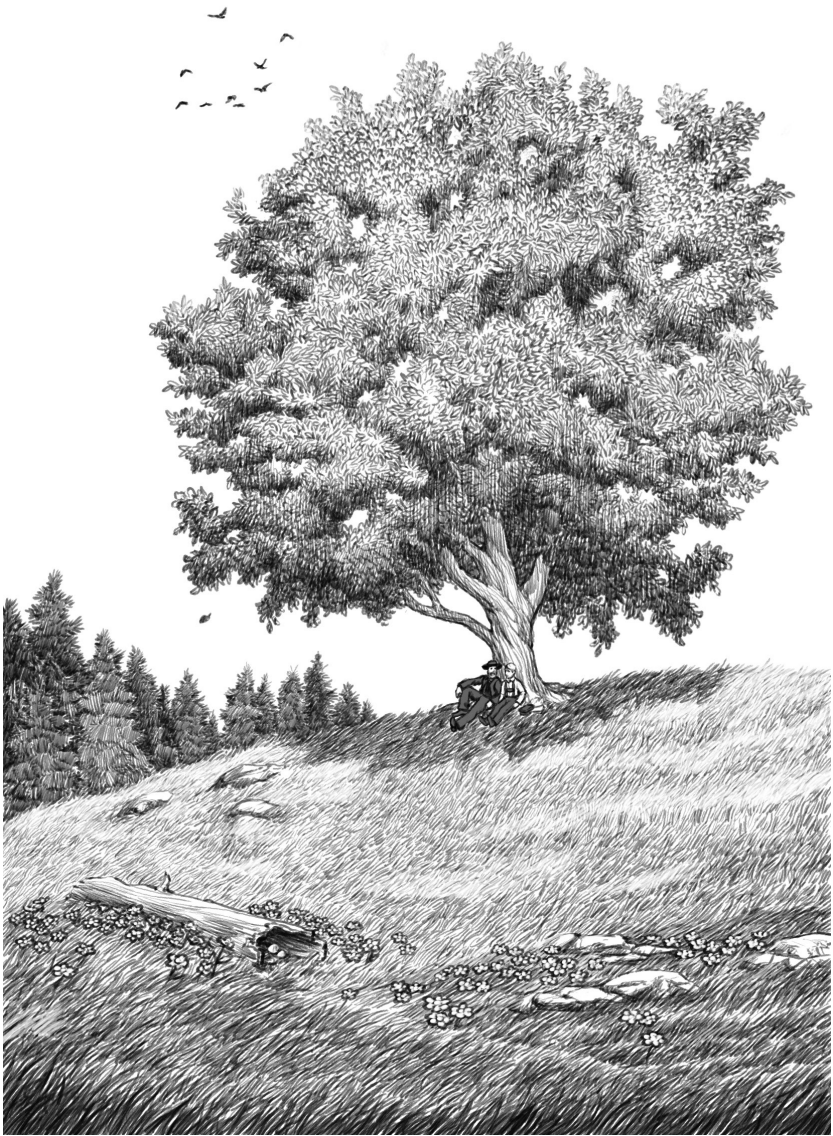
Fritz froze. He saw Agatha’s and Amalia’s big, round eyes staring at him from across the table. Fritz knew he could never tell his hardworking, ever-loving father how he truly felt about the farm and clockmaking. He could never let his

father down. Honest Fritz also could not lie, not even the tiniest bit. He could not make up a story about why he wanted to find Karl Hofer.

Fritz shook his head. “No, sir. I don’t want to tell you, but I promise I’ll never do something like that again.”

Jakob let out a hearty laugh. “OK, Fritz, I’ll accept that. Now eat up. Your mother has outdone herself again with this delicious potato soup.”

Maria, Fritz’s mother, smiled at Jakob, and then she gave a small smile to Fritz. Gretchen, however, continued to narrow her eyes at Fritz, and Peter kept his eyes glued to his soup. Although Father didn’t know about Fritz’s feelings, all his siblings now did.



The clockmaker's Son

During the early 1900s in the Black Forest in Germany, a fourteen-year-old boy named Fritz became lost in a fog, setting in motion a life-changing adventure. Two mysterious girls, a door in a tree, a major accident, profound relationships, and more all weave together to bring the reader laughter, tears, and reflection on the things that matter most. Penned with a beautifully descriptive style, *The Clockmaker's Son* tells the fictional story of one young man as his family, friends, and Christ help him turn his life around when things seem darker than he could have ever imagined.

■ ORIGINAL PUBLICATION


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