

## ***Baba Yaga's Assistant***

By Marika McCoola

Illustrated by Emily Carroll

### *Grade Levels:*

- Grades 4-7

### *Synopsis:*

Masha is unhappy when her father announces he is going to remarry. All she can think of are the stories her grandmother told her about evil stepmothers and the terrible trickster Baba Yaga. Masha feels unwanted at home and decides to apply for a job after reading this ad: "ASSISTANT WANTED ASAP: Must have skills in hauling, obeying orders, cooking and cleaning. Magical talent a bonus. Must be good with heights. Enter Baba Yaga's house to apply." Feeling that nothing can be as bad as her situation at home, she heads to the witch's house to apply for the job. After Masha finds she can survive and outwit Baba Yaga's tests, she discovers that she has the courage to return home.

### *Author Website:*

- <http://www.marikamccoola.com/>

### *Curricular Connections:*

- Fantasy genre
- Family Life
- Baba Yaga
- Folklore/trickster tales
- Graphic Novels

### *Lesson Ideas:*

- Folklore – Compare and contrast *Baba Yaga's Assistant* to other Russian folktales featuring Baba Yaga.
- Trickster tales – Novel study using *Baba Yaga's Assistant* identifying the characteristics of trickster tales.
- Character Study – How does Masha change over the course of the story? How does Masha outwit the witch? Graphic organizer can be used to identify the problem, solution and character traits of the main characters, Baba Yaga and Masha.

### *Suggested Companion Titles:*

- *Grandma Chickenlegs* by McCaughrean, Geraldine.
- *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave* by Mariana Mayer
- *Babushka Baba Yaga* by Patricia Polacco

*Professional Reviews:*

- *Booklist* (06/01/15)
- *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* starred (10/01/15)
- *Horn Book Guide* (04/01/16)
- *Kirkus Reviews* starred (06/15/15)
- *Library Media Connection* (01/01/16)
- *Publishers Weekly* (05/25/15)
- *School Library Journal* (08/01/15)
- *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)* (08/01/15)