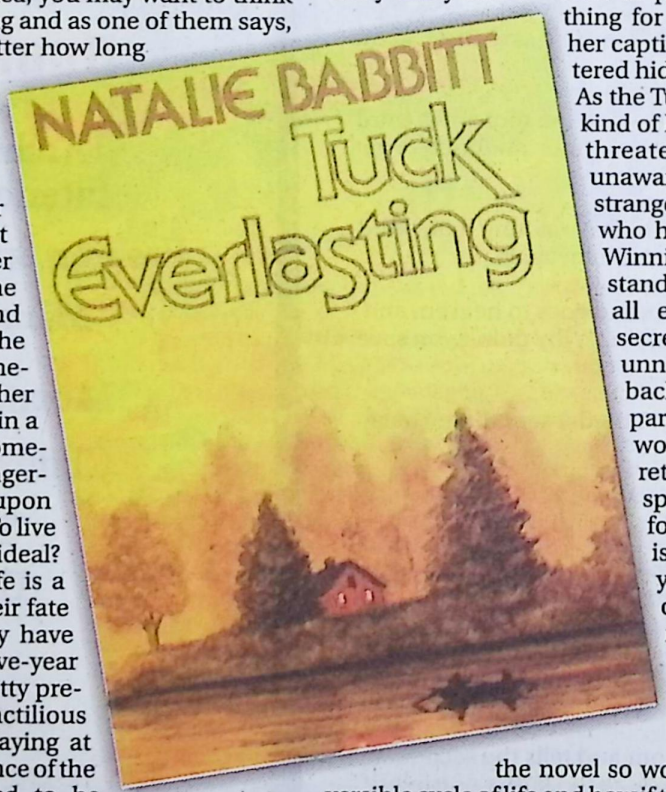
Tuck Everlasting

Author: Natalie Babbitt
Reviewer: Sameeha Suraiya

AN ancient spring at the corner of a lonely wood. The water, if drunk, freezes one in time, giving everlasting life. A family accidentally wanders into it, drinking its clear water with no idea that their lives were to change forever. Or rather, from that moment on, that they would be living lives without any woes of change. If you think living forever is a neat idea, you may want to think again. The Tucks are everlasting and as one of them says, "Life's got to be lived...no matter how long or short...", life for them really is a lifetime of eternity. Bound in a historical setting, the tale still holds back an anyplace, anytime, feel to it.



Award winning author for young adults, Natalie Babbitt spins a story that will live forever in the hearts of the readers. She raises difficult questions and offers tempting choices. In the small town of Treegap, somewhere in upstate New York, her characters are pulled together in a wild unstoppable adventure, sometimes veering on to tread dangerous paths. Imagine stumbling upon a fountain of youth in a forest. To live foreverisn't that everyone's ideal? For the Tuck family, eternal life is a reality, but their reaction to their fate raises questions that one may have never likely asked before. Twelve-year old Winnie Foster has led a pretty predictable life under the punctilious observance of her parents. Playing at the edge of the whitewashed fence of the manicured lawn is considered to be going too far, and a slight bending of rules would be met with stern words. Into her bleak, lonely world tumbles in the Tucks, warm and spirited with a sense of adventure. They bring in an enticing aura of the world that lies outside the prim and proud walls of Winnie's home. They also carry with them a secret that must never be spilled. The Tucks had drunk from the spring in the forest that is owned by Winnie's family. To avoid suspicion, they roam, each in their own directions, reuniting after every eight years in Treegap.

It is on one stifling summer noon, when the wheel of time seemed to have stopped that characters collide and fates intertwine. The Tucks know very well how the knowledge of the spring could shatter all limitations of humanity. Winnie Foster on the other hand has had enough of being hemmed in. She decides to venture out, for the first time, towards the dusty track that snakes past her home and into the forest. Near the spring, she stumbles upon Jesse Tuck, the younger son who is taking a sip out of the water. Feeling thirsty, she too reaches out. As Jesse tries his best to refrain her, Winnie becomes all the more adamant. Mae Tuck and her older son Miles soon arrive on the spot. They all fly into a state of panic and decide the best thing for the moment was to take her captive into their home, a sheltered hideaway beside a quiet lake. As the Tucks explain to Winnie the kind of lives they lead, their secret threatens to explode. Totally unaware are they of a certain stranger, a man in a yellow suit, who has seen them whisk away Winnie on their horses and who stands on their very doorstep, all ears of their dangerous secret. This man who goes unnamed till the end goes back to Winnie's distraught parents and strikes a deal. He would trade Winnie's safe return for the forest. The spring is his way to fame and fortune. What happens next is non-stop adventure that you have to read to find out. This coming-of-age novel sees its protagonist weigh difficult choices and in the end acting beyond her age.

What really plays into the novel so wonderfully well is the irreversible cycle of life and how if tampered with, it can bring unfavorable results. The wheel of time is ever present. There is also the conflict between tradition and the changes that are, for better or for worse, sweeping through the characters who can do nothing but witness the events as they unfold. Told in the most compelling manner, the writer spins her yarn with powerful characterizations and the most vivid imageries woven into with deft artistry.

An engrossing plot most delightfully told, *Tuck Everlasting* will last forever in the reader's imagination as will its many endearing characters. If you agree that the test of literature is whether we live more intensely having read it, look no further. This novel does just that for you.