



## *Rainmaker* by Alison Jackson

**Subjects:** Farm life—Florida—20<sup>th</sup> century—Fiction; Droughts—Juvenile fiction; Coming of age—Fiction

**Book Lists:** Florida, Gifted, Grade 7

**Props:** Leather money sack, dried up orange



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My name is Pidge—at least, that’s what everyone here in Frostfree, Florida calls me. No one uses my real name, which is Miriam, and I wouldn’t answer them if they did. I live with my pa, Big Jack, my pesky brother, Little Jack, and my Aunt Retta. That’s ‘coz Mama left us years ago when Little Jack was a tiny baby. He doesn’t even remember her. I do—a little.

This is my 13<sup>th</sup> summer, the summer of 1939. But this summer is so different from all the ones before it. For starters, my brother, Little Jack, who I could always count on to lend me a hand around the house or the farm, has suddenly begun to sass me. Every chance he gets, he’s saying things like, “Go jump in a lake” or “Tell me somethin’ I don’t already know.” It’s enough to drive a person crazy.

And then, Pa is making eyes at the new church organist. This does not make me happy. It’s just been us since my ma left. So now, I’m trying to find out as much as I can about her, her life—and her death. And to make matters worse, boys my own age, who I’ve known my whole life, are treating me differently now, especially Noah Blore. He seems more grown up somehow and he has a way of laughing at things that I find likeable. Ugh, it just makes me confused.

And then, there’s the weather. This summer, it’s real bad. It’s been so dry for months, the oranges in all the orange groves are drying up. (*Bring out dried up orange*) Everyone in our small town in Polk County is hoping—no, praying for rain. If it doesn’t rain soon, our family,

and all the other families around here, are gonna lose their groves. And not just their groves, but their homes! (*Put orange down*)

And with this lack of rain, there’s sink holes to worry about. We’ve already lost the town’s general store. The B & B market got gobbled up by a huge sink hole, sunk right in, right in the center of town. A year ago, I would have hung around the sink hole with Denny and Noah and the other kids from school. But this summer, I just don’t know.

Anyway, to solve the rain problem, rich Dr. Wheaton wants all the growers in Frostfree to use scientific methods in the management of their orange groves. So you can imagine that he doesn’t take any stock in my pa’s plan. My pa, well, people look up to him, and he has a plan to change the weather. He’s collecting money from the folks around here (*Bring out leather money sack*) and he’s putting up just about all the money we have to bring Miss Millie Boze here to Florida to save our little town. Miss Millie is a 67-year-old woman from Mississippi—nearly half deaf—but folks say she has mysterious powers that no one can explain. The rain, well, it follows her. They call her. . . the Rainmaker. But rain or shine, it’s not likely that this will be a summer I’m ever going to forget. (*Put money sack down*)

Read the humorous, compassionate story of Pidge, her family, and her small town of Frostfree, Florida. (*Hold up book*) *Rainmaker* by Alison Jackson.