



Flower Power

Ann Walsh

Reading level: 3.5
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Book Summary

Callie's mother has chained herself to the neighbor's tree and is living inside the tree house. She refuses to come down until her neighbor, Mr. Wilson, agrees to leave the tree standing. Soon reporters arrive to interview Callie about her mother's protest. Callie doesn't want to talk to anyone. More chaos ensues when Callie's grandmother invites the "Singing Grannies" to help save the tree, Mr. Wilson's biker friends come to his aid, and Callie's friends show up to try to get themselves on tv. Callie needs to figure out how to get her mother to come down from the tree so that her life can return to normal.

Author Biography

Ann Walsh is the award-winning author of many popular historical novels for children and young adults. *Flower Power* is her first novel with Orca Book Publishers. She began writing the story while her mother, a dedicated environmentalist, was ill. In many ways, she says, this novel is a tribute to her own mother's beliefs and values. Ann lives in Williams Lake, British Columbia, with her husband.

Connecting to the Text*Character*

1. In *Flower Power*, Callie Powers is placed in the middle of a conflict close to home. Her mother, Dian Powers, is protesting the removal of a tree in her neighbor's yard and has chained herself inside its tree house. Dian refuses to come out of the tree house until her neighbor, Mr. Wilson, agrees to leave the tree standing. Mr. Wilson has refused and insists that the tree come down so that he can build a garage for his motorcycle. Ask students to choose one of the following writing exercises to complete:
 - ◆ Pretend you are Callie and you want to keep the tree house. Write a letter to Mr. Wilson. How can you persuade him to leave it the way it is?
 - ◆ Pretend you are Callie and you don't want to keep the tree house. Write a letter to Dian, your mom. How can you persuade her to stop her protest and let Mr. Wilson cut the tree down?
 - ◆ Think of something from your childhood that you have outgrown but still find it hard to part with (perhaps a favorite toy, movie or book). Write a journal/diary entry about this item. What makes it special to you? Why is it hard to get rid of it? If you had to get rid of it, what would you do with it?
2. Callie's father becomes involved when he sees the protest on the nightly news. Callie contemplates going to stay with him for a while, but changes her mind. Ask students to choose one of the following writing exercises to complete.
 - ◆ Pretend you are Callie. Write a letter to your dad, explaining how you feel. Is there a way to make the relationship work better? Think of ideas and express them in your letter.
 - ◆ Pretend you are Callie. Write a journal/diary entry, expressing your feelings about your dad and his new family. Is there a way to make the relationship work better for you?
3. In chapter 3, Callie describes Peter Dawl as "a skinny guy with thick glasses and a notebook." Ask students to write a brief description of the other main characters in *Flower Power*.
 - ◆ Callie is _____.
 - ◆ Dian is _____.
 - ◆ Mr. Wilson is _____.
 - ◆ The Singing Grannies are _____.
 - ◆ The Motorcycle Club members are _____.

4. Callie's mom, Dian Powers, is a prominent figure in *Flower Power*, and she and Callie don't always get along. Callie has mixed feelings about her mother and her mother's intentions.

(ch. 2) *While I made Mom's toast and filled the kettle, things started to make sense. Not that anything Mom did made much sense.*

(ch. 4) *I shrugged. "Mom didn't tell me anything. She never does."*

(ch. 4) Grandma: *"Your mother's had a lot to think about, dear. This is a brave thing she's doing."*

Callie: *"Brave? I think it's stupid."*

Ask students to complete one of the following writing exercises.

- ♦ Peter Dawl says that Callie's Mom "...sounds like an interesting lady," to which Callie responds, "That's not exactly the word I'd use to describe Mom." (p. 5). Write a paragraph describing Dian Powers. What kind of a person is she? Is she someone you would want to get to know? Why, or why not? Use examples from *Flower Power* in your description.
- ♦ Write a paragraph describing Callie. Is she someone you could be friends with? Why, or why not?
- ♦ Dian Powers tells the press that she won't leave the tree until Mr. Wilson changes his mind about taking the tree down; however, Dian sneaks out of the tree house when nobody is looking—using Callie as a cover—so that she can have a shower. Callie asks, "...Isn't that cheating?" (ch. 6). Write a paragraph describing your response to this. Is it okay for Dian to do this? Why, or why not?

Theme

In *Flower Power*, there is much discussion of the value of the tree to Callie, to her mother, and to the community. Have the students discuss as a group the overriding conflict: Dian Powers wants to keep the tree and tree house, and Mr. Wilson wants to remove it so that he can build a garage for his new motorcycle. Have students work in small groups to complete one of the following.

- Debate: Removing the Tree—For or Against
Separate into two sides. One side will be for the removal of the tree and tree house, and the other side will be against its removal. Brainstorm ideas to defend your side's opinion, for or against removing the tree. List three reasons on index cards. With the teacher acting as moderator, present your debate in front of the large group.

- Debate: Who owns the tree and the tree house?
Separate into two sides. One side will argue that Mr. Wilson owns the tree and the other side will argue that Dian Powers owns the tree. Note, the tree was originally planted in Mr. Wilson's yard but the tree house is in the part of the tree that is in Dian Powers' yard. The lumber for the tree house was purchased by the Powers family, and both families built the tree house together. Brainstorm ideas to defend your side's opinion. List three reasons on index cards. With the teacher acting as moderator, present your debate in front of the large group.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. In *Flower Power*, a number of symbols are presented. Use the symbols from *Flower Power* listed below as a lead-in to a discussion about symbols and their meanings.
 - (ch. 5) *"Back in the sixties, the hippies were called 'Flower Children.'...Flowers were a symbol of love..."*
 - (ch. 6) *...three women, three generations, each dressed in the color of the flower she is named for...The vibrant colors they wear reflect the determination of these remarkable women...*

Have students complete the following exercises as a group.

- ◆ Discuss the two symbols listed above, flowers/peace and color/determination. How do symbols work? Why are they so powerful? Can you think of other symbols that are used in *Flower Power*? Ideas might include: a red rose, a motorcycle and the chain around Dian Powers' ankle.
- ◆ Introduce common cultural symbols and discuss their meanings. Ideas might include: the national flag, a judge's gavel, wedding rings, a leather jacket, a crucifix, a skull and crossbones, etc.

Option: You may wish to delineate between universal symbols and local, cultural-specific symbols. For example, students may be able to comment on the American flag as a universal symbol of freedom, democracy, etc. Challenge them to think of smaller, more locally-used symbols within their daily school lives, such as wearing certain styles of clothing. Encourage students to look at the symbols around them as objectively as possible.

2. Newspaper stories are organized and written in a particular way. In a group, compare the organization of a newspaper article to other compositions students are familiar with, such as journal writing, fiction, comic strips/graphic novels, poetry, etc. Present and discuss the different parts of a newspaper article. You may wish to bring in local newspapers so that you can deconstruct a few of the articles.
3. Newspaper articles must report on the 5 W's: who, what, when, where and why. These details are summarized in the first paragraph, and then they are expanded on in the following paragraphs. Ask students to write a newspaper article reporting on Dian Powers' "sit-in" in the tree, using the model below.

Headline:

Who: _____

What: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

Why: _____

Option: You may wish to continue on the newspaper theme by asking students to work in small groups to create a class newspaper, complete with headlines, stories, pictures, advertising, classified ads, comic strips, horoscopes, weather, table of contents, etc. Designate responsibilities to individuals or small groups, including the roles of editor, photographer/illustrator, reporters, layout expert, headline writer, advertising specialist and production workers.

Science

In *Flower Power*, the Powers family women are named for flowers: Calendula (Callie, our main character), Dianthus (Dian, Callie's mom), Rose (Callie's grandmother), and Geranium (Gerrie, Callie's aunt).

- Ask the students to work in groups to research these four flowers (you may wish to use the following questions):
 - ◆ What is the Latin name of the flower?
 - ◆ What is the color and shape of the flower?
 - ◆ What is the color and shape of the leaves?
 - ◆ Is this flower a perennial, an annual or a shrub?
 - ◆ Write one interesting fact about this flower (its history, medicinal qualities, the meaning of its name, the climate it is home to, superstitions associated with it, etc.).
- Ask the groups to draw pictures of the flowers and create a poster using the images. Write descriptions under the pictures. For example:

Name: Calendula
(*Calendula officinalis*)
Annual & Perennial

Color: orange, daisy shaped

Leaves: spirally arranged, 5-18 cm long, simple, and slightly hairy

Interesting facts: The ointment of this herb is thought to cure a range of skin problems from burns to acne as it has properties that reduce inflammation, control bleeding and soothe irritated skin.

Option: Depending on space, time of year and classroom resources, you may wish to plant a classroom garden. Ask students to research the soil, water and light requirements for different plants. Students may wish to assign or elect caretakers over the growing season.

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. In *Flower Power*, Callie Powers' neighbor, Mr. Wilson, joins a motorcycle club. He describes how he feels about the club and his membership in it in the following examples:

(ch. 2) *Then Mom laughed. "But you're an accountant. You don't even know how to ride a motorbike."*

"I do too," he said. "I joined a club. I'm learning to..."

(ch. 2) *"A motorcycle gang? You belong to a gang?"*

"No. It's a club. It's not a gang."

(ch. 9) *"They're members of my bike club—my new friends," he answered. "They've come to support me..."*

- ♦ Many children, youth and adults are drawn to membership in groups. Typically, youth gangs, youth groups and membership clubs have the following in common:
 - They provide to their members a sense of belonging and identity
 - They wear (and present to others) a common style of dress or uniform
 - They share common interests and goals.

As a group, discuss some of the elements of groups/clubs/gangs that are attractive or appealing to youth. Talk about clubs and gangs. What's the difference between the two? What characteristics do youth groups/clubs/gangs share? Why do kids join them? Assign or elect a scribe who will list the reasons given on the board. Encourage the students to discuss the reasons as objectively as possible.

- ♦ Invite the students to research and discuss well-known youth organizations that are accessible in your community (such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Girl Guides, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, etc.) How can kids join? How much does it cost? What kind of activities do they participate in? Discuss the ways that these organizations fulfill the three elements listed above (i.e., Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts wear uniforms, have ceremonies, are organized in packs or troops and go on camping and hiking trips together).
2. The Singing Grannies are based on a real group called The Raging Grannies. In 1987 in Victoria, Canada, a group of older women peace activists who called themselves the Raging Grannies protested the presence of a nuclear submarine in a Canadian port. The small group of "Grannies" rowed a kayak out to the submarine and caught media attention around the world. There are now Raging Grannies organizations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and Greece.

- ◆ Research the Raging Grannies. What is their mission or goal? How do they achieve this? Create a collage of images of Raging Grannies. How are they different from other protesters or activists? Give examples.
 - ◆ Explore the history of the Raging Grannies. Prepare a short presentation describing their beginnings in Victoria, Canada. What were they protesting? Why did they get so much attention?
 - ◆ The Raging Grannies started as a small local group at a single event but soon grew into an international phenomenon. There are now many groups all around the world. How are the groups similar? What kind of issues and events do they protest? Find three examples. Make a poster showing three of the issues or events the Raging Grannies have protested. Present your poster to the class, describing the examples.
 - ◆ The Raging Grannies use costumes, signs and music to get their message across. Pretend that you are a group protesting an issue in your community and create a poster which shows how you feel. Decide first what issue your poster will address: it could be a local issue, such as school rules, uniforms, curfews, etc.; or a global issue, such as pollution or global warming. Present your poster to the class, talking about the issue you chose—and the methods you used to get your message across.
 - ◆ The Singing Grannies in *Flower Power* wrote their own words to the tune “This Land is Your Land.” The Raging Grannies sing too. Research some of their songs. Write your own protest song to the tune of “This Land is Your Land” (or another well-known song, such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” or “Jingle Bells”). Decide first what issue your song will address; it could be a local issue, such as school rules, uniforms, curfews, etc., or a global issue, such as pollution or global warming.
3. In *Flower Power*, there are many references to local regulations and permits:
- (ch. 10) Policeman: “*We understand that the resident at this address is holding a protest. We came to make sure the permit is in order.*”
- (ch. 10) “*Ma’am, your daughter needs a permit to hold a protest,*” said one of the policemen. “*Otherwise, it’s illegal.*”
- (ch. 12) “*This has gone far enough, Dian. I’ve got a permit to remove this tree. Come down or you’ll be sorry.*”

Each community has codes and regulations which govern matters such as parking and zoning and issues permits for gatherings. As individual or small group exercises, have students research the local community government and its regulations. Call or visit your City Hall or visit their website. What regulations are in place for holding a protest like Dian Powers did? What permits would you have to get and how would you get them? How long does it take? Is there a cost involved?

Web Resources

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newspaper#Format>

www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr170.shtml

www.theteachersguide.com/plantsflowers.htm

www.scouting.org

www.girlscouts.org

www.scouts.ca

www.girlguides.ca

www.ymca.net

www.ymca.ca

www.bgca.org