



## **Hold the Pickles**

Vicki Grant

Reading Level: 3.1

978-1-55469-920-9 PB

978-1-55469-921-6 LIB

AR Quiz # 150532

### **Book Summary**

Dan Hogg is thrilled when his uncle offers him some work at a food fair, because he wants money to hire a professional trainer to help him with his scrawny physique. His excitement vanishes when he learns that the job is dressing up in a hotdog costume and handing out samples. Every dark cloud has its silver lining, Dan discovers, when he, or rather Frank Lee Better, his mascot persona, gains the attention of a pretty girl named Brooke. The attention is great until Dan finds himself under attack from Cupcake Katie and a mysterious guy with a strange interest in Brooke. It's not until he's huddling in a bathroom in nothing but his underwear that Dan begins to suspect that Brooke's attention might be too good to be true.

### **Author Biography**

**Vicki Grant** left her career in advertising and television to write her first novel, *The Puppet Wrangler*, in 2004. She enjoys writing for young adults, with a particular interest in reluctant readers. Vicki's books have won many awards, including the prestigious Arthur Ellis Award in 2006. She lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her husband and three children.

## Connecting to the Text

### *Plot*

There are a number of times in the novel when Dan has a gut feeling about a person or a situation, and his actions are in response to that feeling. Ask students to consider the following scenes from *Hold the Pickles*. For each, consider how Dan's response influences how the story subsequently unfolds. Then ask students to imagine Dan reacting differently. How would the novel's plot have changed?

- In chapter 10, Brooke asks Dan if she can try the hotdog costume on. She says that Dan made it look “like so much fun.” Although Dan says, “everything told me to say no,” he lets her use the costume anyway. What if he had refused?
- In chapter 11, while Brooke is pretending to be the Hogg Dogg, Dan reacts to Kelsey “rooting around in that big purse of hers.” Dan says, “Something about it irritated me.” What if Dan had confronted Kelsey about her big purse?
- In chapter 15, Dan says, “Sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.” He wraps himself in toilet paper as a disguise and goes back to the Fun Fair to look for Brooke. What if he had stayed in the bathroom? Would Brooke and Kelsey have gotten away?

### *The Writer's Craft*

1. Alliteration is a way for the writer to draw attention to words and their sounds and rhythms by using similar or same sounds at the beginning of each word in a sequence. Rhyming is another tool used by writers, particularly in poems and songs. Ask students to consider the use of alliteration and rhyming in *Hold the Pickles*, making a connection to the use of these tools in advertising. Discussion topics include:
  - ♦ Think of examples of alliteration in the novel (there are many): Burrito-Bits, Cupcake Katie, Food Fantasia Fun Fair, Hammy Hogg, Healthy Hottie, Sushi Sue. A good example is found in chapter 5: “He started spitting and sputtering and scraping at his tongue...I could barely breathe.” For novel writers and advertisers, what makes alliteration appealing?
  - ♦ Can you think of characters, celebrities, musical groups or teams with alliterative names? Ask students to see how many letters of the alphabet they can find examples for: Arthur the Aardvark, Bilbo Baggins, Chester Cheetah, Dr. Dre, Fancy Feast, Hungry Hungry Hippo, Rock 'n Roll.
  - ♦ Think of examples of rhyming found in the novel. Examples include: Hogg's Doggs, Eat-o-Burritos, tighty-whities. For novel writers and advertisers, what makes rhyming appealing?

2. As well as alliteration and rhyming, advertisers use other methods for getting people to remember their products. The following topics can be used to connect the writer's craft to students' experiences:
  - ♦ Think of examples of products sold at the Food Fantasia Fun Fair and describe what methods were used to bring attention to the product (e.g., clever or funny slogans, bold colors, movement, repetition, etc.). Examples include: Codfather's Fish and Chips (use of pun); free samples; appeals to health or healthy living, such as Flab-U-Less Lo-Cal Pizza; gaudy costumes; and catchy slogans such as *The Healthy Hottie! From Hawwwwwwwwwg's Doggs!*
  - ♦ Imagine you are selling a new product at a fair, like Uncle Hammy. Working in pairs or triads, create marketing ideas for a product of your choice, and share it with the large group. (Encourage students to consider what methods work for their peer groups, or demographics. Students may wish to create mock TV commercials, radio jingles, posters, smart phone apps, memes, Tweets, etc.)

### *Character*

In chapter 1, Dan describes himself by saying he has an “all-round nerdy vibe,” a “dork instinct” and a “scrawny physique.” Throughout the novel, he uses terms like “schmuck” and “puny little me.” Ask students to reflect on the character Dan. Would he be someone you would want to be friends with? Why, or why not? Is he really a “schmuck”? Consider the following:

- In chapter 2, Dan decides to stick with selling Hogg's Doggs at the Fun Fair because although it's humiliating, he wants to support his uncle. Dan says, “I hated everything about the job, but I couldn't let Hammy down. I knew his business was going through a rough patch...He was desperate.” What does this decision tell us about Dan?
- Dan says he had to “pack up his self-respect” to stick with the job. On what do you think Dan's sense of self-respect is based? Is it his appearance or his character? Which is more important to you? How do you demonstrate this?
- In chapter 15, Dan decides that “sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do” and he disguises himself as a mummy by wrapping himself in toilet paper. He decides to “focus on getting to Brooke.” Do you think that took courage and determination?

### *Point of View and Vocabulary*

1. The following words are used in *Hold the Pickles*. Invite students to write an “elevator speech” describing what happens in the novel, using four or more words from the vocabulary list below. An elevator speech is a short speech that takes no more than a few minutes to deliver; the amount of time one spends on an elevator.

- ♦ Ask students to write their speeches from the point of view of Dan, Brooke, Kelsey or Blue Boy, drawing on the novel while being creative and persuasive. Ensure there is an equal distribution of characters throughout the class. Once complete, invite students to share their speeches. How does point of view influence each character's take on what happened?

arrest	defense	pickpockets	security guard
associates	detaining	police station	suspicious
convict	disguise	predicament	theory
convince	evidence	recognize	unconscious
decoy	mastermind	robbery	victims

2. The following words are used in the context of the Fun Fair. Invite students to write a descriptive paragraph that captures the essence of the fair, from the point of view of one of the following (or another of the student's choice), using four or more of the words below. Once complete, invite students to share their paragraphs in the large group. How did point of view influence their writing?

- ♦ Ideas for point of view include: an excited child visiting the Fun Fair for the first time; a business person who is considering selling their product at the fair next year; a visitor who has a headache; a person for whom English is a second language; a student who is researching what advertising approaches work best.

business	customers	hollering	signs
convince	delicious	mascots	slogans
costume	exhibition	samples	smells
crowd	fair	security	territory

### Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. Like many products on the market, Uncle Hammy claims his hotdogs are “all natural.” What does that mean? As a research project, find out what guidelines exist for meat and poultry products to be able to make this or other claims. Can anyone call their product “all natural,” “organic” or “fresh”? What agency oversees these claims? See the Web Resources below for labeling guidelines in the United States and Canada, as well as educator's resources, such as puzzles, word searches, activities and articles.
2. In chapter 10, Brooke says that the “creepy” guy had been “following [her] around all day.” She also says, “I should have been firmer with him in the first place, but I didn't want to hurt his feelings.” Ask students to reflect on this comment, imagining that Brooke was actually a customer of the fair being followed by someone who was making her uncomfortable. Would avoiding him or ignoring him be the right thing to do? What other options did she have? (Consider that she had a cell phone and there were security personnel at the fair.) Ask students what they would do if they were in a similar situation.

3. In chapter 5, when Dan first sees Shane, he says, "I shouldn't say Shane Coolen is terrible. Not anymore at least...[He's] gotten nicer. We even kind of get along now." If students want to read more about Dan, Shane and their adventures, introduce them to *Pigboy* in the Orca Currents Series, also by Vicki Grant. In *Pigboy*, Dan and Shane take a school field trip to a working farm. Dan discovers that there is an escaped convict posing as the farmer, and the real farmer and Dan's teacher have been bound and gagged.

**Web Resources**

[www.fsis.usda.gov/Factsheets/Meat\\_&\\_Poultry\\_Labeling\\_Terms/index.asp#top](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Factsheets/Meat_&_Poultry_Labeling_Terms/index.asp#top)

[www.fsis.usda.gov/Food\\_Safety\\_Education/For\\_Kids\\_&\\_Teens/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/For_Kids_&_Teens/index.asp)

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/index-eng.php)