



## **Sticks and Stones**

Beth Goobie

Reading level: 2.6

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AR Quiz # 58582

### **Book Summary**

When Jujube made the mistake of spending a few minutes making out in the backseat of a car with Brent, she is labeled a slut. Even though nothing sexual happened between them, Brent allows his buddies to believe that Jujube was fast and easy and insinuates that she went all the way on the first date. Jujube faces the fact that she will have to endure snide remarks, crude comments and knowing looks, but when she discovers her name written on the walls of the school's bathrooms, she determines to set the story straight. With the help of her friend Sophie, an English assignment and other girls who have been slandered, she forces change in her school.

### **Prereading Idea**

Show students several covers of tabloid magazines with outrageous stories. Then discuss the stories and the plausibility of their truthfulness and accuracy. Ask students what possible ramifications could be the results of the stories? What do the "spreaders" of these rumors hope to gain?

**Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas**

- Sophie's father was in jail for abusing her and her mother, and when he was released from prison, Sophie's mom starts seeing him again. She eventually moves back in with him, despite Sophie's pleas. Ask students to investigate family violence and determine possible reasons women choose to stay in abusive relationships, endangering the lives of their children. If there is a battered women's shelter in your community, arrange for a speaker to address your class.
- The gossip and rumor mill in the average high school operates nonstop, hurting feelings and destroying the reputation of many students, both girls and boys. Ask students to write a letter to their school newspaper taking a stand against gossip. Or ask them to write a reaction poem to an experience they have had as a victim of gossip or as the source of hurtful things said about someone else. Students can share their letters or poems with the class.

**Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel*****Theme***

The theme of a book is often determined by the lessons the major characters learn about themselves and life. In groups of three, ask students to list the characters and determine what they learned. Have each student choose a character and "the lesson" they learned and draw a life map (or path) of that character, placing the lesson learned at the end of the map. Have students record obstacles and events along the path that brought the character to this lesson. Ask students to add visual elements to the life map.

***Conflict***

Jujube not only deals with the external conflict of rumors and gossip, but she also deals with internal conflict from the pain caused by the lies being told about her. The other major characters also deal with both types of conflict. In pairs, ask students to use a manila folder to illustrate the character's conflict. On the outside of the folder, ask students to write the character's name and list his or her external conflicts. On the inside of the folder, list the character's internal conflict. Students can then add one or more of the following to the outside and inside of the folder: visual representations of the conflict, textual evidence (quotations) that demonstrate the conflict, and the resolution of the conflict. Display the completed folders around the room.

***Character***

Ask Students to choose one of the major characters in the book to analyze using five index cards. Write a one paragraph description on each card expressing what they know about (1) their appearance, (2) their speech, (3) their actions, (4) their emotions and (5) what others think of them. Then ask a student to read each card aloud in any order and have their classmates infer what kind of character the person is.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. The title of the book is based on the childhood chant, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me.” What are the fallacies of this idiom based on the experiences of Sophie and Jujube? What personal experiences have you had that prove this idiom wrong?
2. Sophie says, “...the way kids gang up on someone. It’s like they only feel strong when they’re in a group, putting someone else down.” Do you think this is a true statement? On what do you base your belief?
3. Sophie tells Jujube that “a rep is something other people give you. They know they can turn you into anything they want.” And Carlos says, “You’re letting them tell you who you are.” When do you think Jujube begins to see the truth in these statements? What does she do about it? What do you think you would do in Jujube’s situation?
4. In the lunchroom and hallways, Jujube was assaulted with crude comments and knowing looks. She says, “They never actually touched me, but it felt like they had...” Why do you think she felt physically assaulted by the comments?
5. What changed at school after Carlos and Jujube made their presentation to the class? Do you think the attitude toward gossip and rumor will be a permanent change? Why or why not?
6. When Brent finally apologizes to Jujube, he says, “It was just a joke. Why’d you have to take it so personal?”
7. Jujube responds, “For you, it was a joke. For me, it was my life.” What makes a joke a joke? Why were Brent’s actions not funny?

**Writer’s Craft*****Foreshadowing***

In chapter one and two, the author uses foreshadowing to get the readers ready for the events to come. If Jujube would have been aware of the “signs,” then she might have reacted differently. In pairs, ask students to find the “clues” she missed that could have forewarned her of Brent’s possible actions. As students share their list, compile the “clues” on the board.

**Author Biography**

Born in Guelph, Ontario, **Beth Goobie** taught piano in high school, she worked as a nanny before attending the University of Winnipeg, and for six years after she graduated from the University, she worked with physically and sexually abused children. Then in 1987 she began to write stories, thrilling readers with her thought-provoking novels about teens who have been abused and hurt. Her award-winning novels touch the hearts of all those who read them.