



Tampered

Michele Martin Bossley

Reading level: 3.8

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Book Summary

Trevor has started his first job at Ashton's Fresh Marketplace, where someone has been tampering with the food. Cayenne has been sprinkled on cookies, garlic put in coffee, and plastic insects hidden in fruit displays to terrify customers. Trevor and his friends, Nick and Robyn, decide to find out who is out to destroy the store's reputation. Is it Mattie, the disgruntled ex-employee, or is it the competition? Or could it be Alex, who doesn't know when a joke has gone too far? When their sleuthing makes them suspects, they realize they have to solve the mystery before Trevor gets fired for a crime he didn't commit.

Author Biography

Michele Martin Bossley was born in Boston, Massachusetts, but grew up in Calgary, Alberta. She is the author of over a dozen novels for young people. Many of her books have been chosen by the Canadian Children's Book Centre for the Our Choice list. Others have been nominated for the Manitoba and Alberta Reader's Choice Award, and she was runner-up for the 1997 Writers' Guild of Alberta R. Ross Annett Children's Literature award. A frequent speaker at writing conferences and schools, Michele divides her time between writing and parenting her four sons. She lives in Calgary, Alberta.

Students who enjoy the adventures of Trevor and his friends will want to read these novels from the Orca Currents series: *Bear Market*, *Bio-Pirate*, *Cracked*, *Fraud Squad* and *Swiped*.

Connecting to the Text

Character Study

In chapter 8, Alex tells Trevor that he has a police record for mischief and damage to public property (a police station). He was set up by other boys: "I was the new kid trying to fit in, and I got hung out to dry." Alex worries his record will make him a suspect for the food tampering incidents at Ashton's Fresh Marketplace. Use the following for discussion or writing assignment topics:

- Besides his police record, what other personality traits or behaviors could make Alex a suspect? **Prompt:** he plays practical jokes.
- When Alex tells Trevor about vandalizing the police station, he says, "It was a stupid thing to do." When you consider his past record and that he plays practical jokes, at the end of the novel do you think Alex learns his lesson? Imagine Alex in six months' time. Do you think he'll be pranking or committing crimes to fit in?
- Alex said, "People expect you to prove something when you're new. You can't let them know you're scared when they test you." Robyn said, "You don't have to break the law to make friends" (ch. 11). If Alex were new to your school, what would be a good way for him to make friends?

The Writer's Craft

1. Michele Martin Bossley's use of figurative and descriptive language helps characters come alive for readers. Ask students to consider the following three sentences taken from chapter 1.

As I walked through the produce department, rice crunched under the slick soles of my new dress shoes.

(adjectives; onomatopoeia; alliteration)

I caught my balance, but not before sending the carefully built mountain of apples cascading to the floor.

(metaphor)

It stood out in wispy strands like a wild halo around her face, and her gaze was fixed in mean dislike on my boss.

(adjectives; simile)

Now ask students to find three other sentences in the novel which are examples of figurative and descriptive language. There are some excellent examples in chapter 3, when Trevor and Alex try to fool Ms. Thompson, and in chapter 11, when Trevor and Robyn confront Mattie at her home.

2. Describing body language, or non-verbal communication, helps readers understand characters' feelings and relationships. Ask students to read aloud and then act out scenes in the novel where body language is described. How do these descriptions of non-verbal communication help us relate to the characters and what they're going through?

- ch. 1 Trevor clenched his fists when Nick gestured to the short guy picking up apples. Trevor said Nick “must have known that I was about to throttle him, job or no job, because he dropped his teasing grin.”
- ch. 1 Scott and Mattie argued over her lateness and absenteeism. He used a “placating gesture,” while her gaze “was fixed in mean dislike” and “her mouth [was] twisting as if she had swallowed something bitter.” Scott goes from sitting to standing just when he fires Mattie.
- ch. 3 Trevor and Alex tried to pass off Lauren’s banana bread as their own. Their plan seemed to work until Ms. Thompson made them taste their own banana bread. Begin reading where Alex is described as looking “like a prisoner about to be led to the guillotine.” Note non-verbal communications like curling lips, holding breath, spitting, wiping one’s mouth, and grimacing.

Building Vocabulary

Ask students to compare images of grocery store interiors from the early 20th Century and today. (In a search engine, choose “images” with the text “history, grocery stores,” or direct students to local libraries or historical societies.) Ideas for student projects are below.

- After collecting and then comparing images of past and present, what are two things that really stand out for you?
Prompt: variety of products, fruits and vegetables in and out of season, size of store, ways to pay, etc.
- Imagine you are able to travel back in time and you visit Ashton’s Fresh Marketplace in 1913 and again a century later. Write a descriptive paragraph comparing the two, using at least four of the vocabulary words below.
- Imagine, in your mind’s eye, that you are a fly on the wall in a 1913 or a present grocery store. What foods are available, and how are they stored or packaged? What do you see? Smell? Hear?
- Create a shadow box of either (or both!) the 1913 or present stores. Incorporate some of the words from the novel below in your project. How do the meanings differ for the words in each of the two shadow boxes?

aisle	bulk bins	display	groceries
apron	customers	employees	plastic bags
bakery	departments	fruit	policy on returns
produce	service	staff room	vegetables
register	soup cans	uniform	wooden bins

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

Use the following sentences from *Tampered* as the first line or theme for a short story, diary entry or skit.

Option: Can students place these sentences in the context of the novel? Who is talking, and when did this take place?

ch. 2 *Adrenaline shot thorough me like an electric jolt.*

ch. 4 *My whole throat felt like it had been engulfed in fire.*

ch. 6 *Do you boys want to explain why you marinated your chicken in dish soap?*

ch. 7 *You're a lot more concerned about how much work this is going to cause than you are about public safety.*

ch. 10 *Someone tampered with those raspberries...And now it's getting deadly.*

ch. 11 *We need to start investigating who else might be responsible, so you don't get framed.*

Food and Nutrition

In Foods class, Ms. Thompson said that “switching ingredients is not only a bad idea when you’re trying to make something taste good, it can be dangerous” (ch. 3). Ms. Thompson explained that she is allergic to soy and although she doesn’t get a severe reaction, many others do. Later in the novel, Scott changed the labels on cookies which contain peanuts, a common allergen. Ask students to research food allergies, answering the following questions:

- The FDA (American Food and Drug Administration) recognizes eight foods that are common allergens. What are they?
- The FDA recommends that people with food allergies learn to read food labels, avoid offending foods, and recognize early symptoms of allergic reaction. Choose one of the eight common allergen foods and provide a “real life” example for each.
- What is the difference between food allergy and food sensitivity?

Connecting to the World

Topics for Discussion and Discovery

1. In *Tampered*, Scott, the manager of Ashton’s Fresh Marketplace, fires Mattie because she repeatedly misses shifts and is often late. Mattie thinks Scott treated her unfairly, arguing, “I’ve worked here for five years. I’ve got two kids to support, you know” (ch. 1). Ask students to assess this situation. Should Scott have gone easy on Mattie, or did he do the right thing? Instead of firing her, what other options might he have considered?
2. Trevor’s friend Alex has a reputation for practical jokes that sometimes go too far. In chapter 2, he places a plastic spider in the grapes at the Marketplace, frightening an elderly customer with a heart condition. Alex says, “It was just a joke...Chill, dude.” Are practical jokes ever a good idea? Besides causing a commotion in the store, there were other more far-reaching consequences. Ask students to consider the consequences, discussing possible short- and long-term implications for each.

- After finding the spider, the elderly customer said she'd shop somewhere else. (The store could lose customers and revenue; ruin relationships with suppliers; let go of employees, etc.)
 - Seeing the spider incident, Scott got the idea to start tampering with food. (A little girl almost drank a smoothie with plastic in it; people with peanut allergies could have eaten mislabeled products; legal action; danger to employees and customers, etc.)
3. Whether we look at aisles, shelves or the layout of a grocery store, the placement of products is intentional. In a group discussion, ask students to consider the points below. Why do grocery stores or supermarkets arrange products this way?
- Option:** Ask students to make note of interesting placement of products or store layout the next time they're in a store or supermarket, and then share them with the group. Does this change how students "see" stores?
- Many small items (mints, batteries, magazines, gift cards) are placed at eye level along the check-out line.
 - The two products many shoppers look for—bread and milk—are often at opposite sides of the store.
 - Cereals that are enticing to children can often be found on lower shelves.

Web Resources

www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm079311.htm
www.themint.org/parents/grocery-store-as-classroom.html