



Spoiled Rotten

Dayle Campbell Gaetz

Reading level: 2.8

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AR Quiz # 102523

Book Summary

Jessica loves her yearly backpacking trip with her father, but this year everything has changed. This year Jessica has to share her vacation with her new stepmother and her spoiled new stepsister, Amy. Jessica tries to salvage her holiday by sneaking off for a day hike alone, but Amy follows. Jessica is certain that Amy will ruin the day. Amy rises to the challenge of the rigorous hike and Jessica learns that Amy is not as spoiled as she thought. When Amy is injured and night falls, Jessica must face the challenge of hiking through bear country in the dark.

Author Biography

Dayle Campbell Gaetz is the author of many books for children, including these titles from Orca Book Publishers: *Barkerville Gold*, *No Problem*, *Alberta Alibi* and *Something Suspicious in Saskatchewan*. Dayle lives in Campbell River, British Columbia.

Connecting to the Text*Language*

1. Adjectives describe or modify nouns; they help us understand what the noun really means. In *Spoiled Rotten*, there are many examples of powerful adjectives that expand our meaning of the nouns they modify. Demonstrate the power of adjectives by using the following examples taken from the novel. Ask students how the story would be different without them.
 - ◆ Jessica and Amy are walking along the shore of the river.
What kind of shore? A rocky shore.
Prompt: What if it had been a sandy shore? How would the story be different?
 - ◆ Jessica and Amy walk in the water.
What kind of water is it? Ice-cold, glacial water.
Prompt: What if it had been warm water? How would the story be different?
 - ◆ At first, Jessica was disgusted by Amy's crying.
What kind of tears? Phony tears.
Prompt: What if the tears were from sand in her eye? How would the story be different?
 - ◆ Jessica misses her mother very much.
What kind of woman was Jessica's mother? A wonderful, beautiful mother.
Prompt: What if Jessica's mother had been horrible? How would the story be different?
 - ◆ Jessica sees the bear's paws below her.
What kind of paws? Front paws with long, sharp claws.
Prompt: What if they were a teddy bear's paws? How would the story be different?
2. Have students complete the following sentences by adding the missing adjectives based on what they know from having read *Spoiled Rotten*.
 - ◆ Jessica loves her _____ trip with her father, but this year everything is different. Her dad is going to marry Patti. Jessica, her dad, Patti and Patti's daughter Amy are supposed to now be one _____ family.
 - ◆ Jessica has to share her _____ vacation with Patti and Amy. Jessica thinks Amy is a _____ brat and a _____ kid.
 - ◆ On the vacation, Jessica tries to go for a _____ day hike alone, but Amy follows her. It's a very _____ hike. There are _____ rocks, a _____ river and a _____ cliff. Jessica wants to get to the _____ lake. Later, Amy gets into _____ danger and Jessica must be _____ to save her. It's a _____ situation.
 - ◆ Jessica learns that Amy is not as _____ as she thought. When Amy is hurt and night falls, Jessica must face the _____ challenge of hiking through the _____ woods to get help. Jessica sure is a _____ kid!

3. Ask students to match the adjectives to the nouns—based on what they know from their reading of *Spoiled Rotten*:

ADJECTIVES

| | |
|------------|---------|
| white | spoiled |
| winding | loose |
| blue | glacial |
| strong | tall |
| brisk | low |
| chattering | pink |
| dry | brave |

NOUNS

| | |
|----------|---------|
| bank | water |
| rocks | wind |
| cedars | path |
| clothes | water |
| brat | current |
| scrunchy | teeth |
| sky | kid |

Answers: white water, winding path, blue sky, strong current, brisk wind, chattering teeth, dry clothes, spoiled brat, loose rocks, glacial water, tall cedars, low bank, pink scrunchy, brave kid.

The Writer's Craft

Much of the setting in *Spoiled Rotten* is the lush rainforest of coastal British Columbia. Invite students to work in small groups to complete the following questions. You may wish to have students choose any two rather than completing them all.

1. Jessica knows a lot about hiking, canoeing and the outdoor world. When she and Amy come upon the river, Jessica knows that “You can’t just go charging up the river without knowing what you’re doing. You’ve got to read the river” (ch. 7). Using clues from *Spoiled Rotten*, make a list of three things Jessica reads from the river. How does she use this information in the novel?
2. Brainstorm other settings for this novel. First, make notes on what kind of setting you will need, so that the plot of *Spoiled Rotten* can still unfold. For example, you will need a place for Jessica and Amy to journey which has an element of danger. Using this new setting, write a synopsis for your revised version of *Spoiled Rotten*.
3. Like Jessica reading the river, there are many other situations where we take clues from our environment that help us to respond accordingly. Choose a situation from your everyday experience. It could be Saturday at the local shopping mall, the bus ride or walk to school, the hallway at your school, the lineup at the movies, etc. Brainstorm ways that you read your environment. What are the clues? What do they tell you? How do they help you? Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

4. Jessica knows a lot about the natural world and how to survive in it. Study the scenes listed below and write a paragraph for each which answers the corresponding questions. Use evidence you find from reading *Spoiled Rotten*.
- (ch. 6) Jessica and her father know, by looking at the winding path of the river, that “there’s a lake up there.” How do they know? What about the river tells them this?
- (ch. 9) *Amy pointed to something dark and sticky-looking...* How did Jessica know what it was? How did she know they didn’t need to worry yet?
- (ch. 9) Jessica sees the bear print, broken branches and trampled bushes. What could Jessica tell from these signs? What did she do?

Character

The character of Jessica develops significantly in *Spoiled Rotten*. She learns to become more accepting of her stepsister and stepmother.

- As a group, consider these “before” and “after” quotations. You may wish to ask students to read these passages aloud:

Before

(ch. 3) *Amy wore bright pink shorts and a white T-shirt. She had a stupid pink scrunchy on top of her head to hold her hair back from her face. I hate pink. I figured that’s why all of Amy’s new clothes were pink.*

After

(ch. 8) *Cautiously, clinging to a tree trunk for support, I peeked over the edge. And there was that pink scrunchy. What a beautiful sight.*

Before

(ch. 8) *... I have to admit I was scared. Not for me, but for Amy. I wasn’t sure she could do it...Amy was so helpless.*

After

(ch. 10) *Amy, you’re a brave kid. I know that now.*

- In your group discussion, answer the following questions using examples from the novel:
 - ◆ What happened that changed Jessica’s opinion of Amy?
 - ◆ Why does Jessica feel differently about Amy now?
 - ◆ Do you think Jessica and Amy will be close now or will they still have problems getting along?
 - ◆ Has Jessica grown as a person because of what has happened? How do you know?
 - ◆ Can you think of experiences from your own life that helped you grow as a person like Jessica did?

Connecting to the Curriculum

Vocabulary

- The following words are used in *Spoiled Rotten* to describe Jessica and Amy's family boat, the Fanta-sea. Invite students to draw a picture of the Fanta-sea, including these elements of boating life.

Option: Ask students to research the parts of a boat in more detail. They may choose to research different kinds of boats depending on their interests (canoe, ferry, houseboat, junk, kayak, longboat, schooner, etc.).

| | | | | |
|--------|------|--------|------|-----------|
| anchor | bunk | engine | oars | starboard |
| bow | deck | dinghy | port | stern |

- The following words/terms are used in *Spoiled Rotten*. Invite students to write a short story or journal entry using these words. To set the context for students, see page numbers below.

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| boulder | dangerous | expression | river mouth | stubborn |
| coast guard | decision | gorge | shoreline | tantrums |
| coughing | engine | impossible | sputtering | |
| current | excitement | obnoxious | stretcher | |

Art

- The beauty of the coastal British Columbia rainforest is evident in the many images in *Spoiled Rotten*. Using the list below for inspiration or pulling your own images from the novel, draw or paint a picture or create a collage. You may wish to look at tourism books or websites from the Pacific Northwest to get a sense of this natural environment.

| | | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| bright waves | green rain forest | tall cedars | choppy waves | pale blue sky |
| white water | brisk wind | rocky shore | winding path | |

- Choose a scene from *Spoiled Rotten* and create a diorama. If possible, use items from nature that are prominent in the novel, such as grass, rocks, tree leaves and roots, etc.
- Emily Carr was an artist who was famous for her paintings of the natural landscapes of western Canada. Many of her paintings are of rainforests and similar landscapes to those in *Spoiled Rotten*. Research Emily Carr and look at some of the pictures she painted of forest landscapes. Using paints, crayons or oil pastels, create a picture from a scene in *Spoiled Rotten*, mimicking Emily Carr's unique painting style.

Language Arts

1. Ask students to imagine that they are reporters who must write a newspaper article about Jessica and Amy's experience. Students may wish to imagine that they have interviewed Jessica or Amy. Articles should use direct quotations from *Spoiled Rotten*.
2. Jessica is unhappy about having a new stepsister and stepmother. Ask students to imagine that they are Jessica. Challenge students to write two journal entries: one where they use the voice of Jessica at the beginning of the novel, when she feels very sad and negative; and one where they use the voice of Jessica at the end of the novel, when she feels happy and positive. For both journal entries, ask students to use at least five adjectives to describe how Jessica feels.

Geography

1. The setting for *Spoiled Rotten* is the Pacific Northwest, near Powell River in British Columbia, Canada. Many wildlife animals are mentioned in the novel, including a bald eagle, deer, a grizzly bear, a loon and an owl. Have students research one or more of these species. What parts of North America are they indigenous to? What is their habitat like? What do they eat? Are they an endangered species?
2. Jessica has an encounter with a grizzly bear. All over the world, there are many species of bear: the American black bear, Asiatic black bear, brown bear, giant panda, grizzly bear, polar bear, spectacled bear, sloth bear and sun bear. In which parts of the world do we find these different bears? Which are endangered species? What factors contribute to the depletion of these species?
3. Jessica knows a lot about rivers, including how to read them. Research the rivers closest to where you live. All rivers begin at a source of water, such as a lake, and then run downhill, typically toward the ocean. Chart the course of your river on a map. Related terms: bank, flow, ocean, rainfall, river, stream and tributary.
4. The ten longest rivers in the world are:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Nile | 6. Ob-Irtysh |
| 2. Amazon | 7. Huang He (Yellow) |
| 3. Yangtze (Chang Jiang) | 8. Amur |
| 4. Mississippi-Missouri | 9. Congo |
| 5. Yenisey-Angara | 10. Lena |

Research these rivers. On a world map, chart their courses. How many countries do they run through? How long are they? Why is it difficult to measure their length?

5. Using a map of Washington State and the province of British Columbia, find the places that Jessica mentions in the novel: Comox, Desolation Sound, Mount Baker, Powell River, Salt Spring Island and Victoria.

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. Coping with a step- or blended family can sometimes be a challenge. At first, Jessica finds it very hard. What advice would you give to Jessica on how to cope with this? Write a letter to Jessica, explaining how she might deal with her situation. Where could she go for help?
2. Jessica sometimes struggles with her mother's death, and she feels that her father has rushed into marrying Patti. Jessica doesn't want to call Patti "Mom" and she doesn't like Amy saying "Dad." She doesn't want things to change, but her father says she's going to have to get used to it. He also refers to Patti as "your mother." Perhaps Jessica's father could have handled this situation differently. What advice would you give him? Write a letter to him, giving him advice and instructions on how he might handle his situation.
3. Jessica knows more about the outdoors than anyone else her age. Imagine, like Jessica, you are going on a day hike in a natural setting close to where you live. Using clues from *Spoiled Rotten*, make a checklist of the things you need. Why do you need each of the items you're packing? Note, Jessica packed bagels, trail mix, chocolate bars, a pair of jeans, a sweatshirt, her sketchbook, matches and a first-aid kit.
4. Even if you're not going on a hike, it's a good idea to have a small first aid kit with you at all times in case of an emergency. As a group, brainstorm what should go into a first aid kit that is small enough to be carried in a purse, coat pocket or backpack. Items could include: adhesive bandages, a needle and thread, a safety pin, a crayon and paper in a small zip-loc bag, antiseptic towelettes, elastic bands, gauze, waterproof matches, etc. What purpose does each of these items serve? What will you store your first aid kit in so that it stays waterproof?
Option: As a class project, collect these items and prepare individual first-aid kits.
5. Once Jessica returns safely, her father calls the Coast Guard to rescue Amy. Research the Coast Guard. What do they do? Where is the closest Coast Guard station to you? If you wanted to join the Coast Guard, what would you have to do? Where could you find out more about the Coast Guard?
6. Jessica knew what to do when she saw the bear droppings and bear tracks, and she could tell where the bear was by the broken branches and trampled bushes. She also knew what to do when the bear was right in front of her. Is there dangerous wildlife where you live? Research and write a short report on what to do if you see signs of this wildlife or are faced with one of them.

7. When hiking in a wilderness setting, it's important to be sensitive to and protect the natural environment. Make a list of ways you can do this. Ideas might include never littering, obeying all fire regulations, cleaning up after your pet, not planting non-indigenous seeds, not taking away any plants, and so forth.
8. Trailblazing is a form of hiking which is done in wilderness. Because there are no trails, as there would be in a park, trailblazers create their own trails, leaving clues for the people following them. This can be done by arranging rocks or sticks on the ground, using paint on trees or hanging flags from branches. In small groups, where half the group lays a trail and the other half follows the trail, make a trail around your school. Use dark pieces of paper and tape to make your trail symbols.

Web Resources

www.fws.gov/endangered

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River>

www.epa.gov

www.redcross.org/services/hss/lifeline/fakit.html

www.uscg.mil/USCG.shtm

www.emilycarr.ca