



Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen

Nancy Belgue

Interest level: ages 8–11

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128 pages

AR Quiz # 102836

Consider the following question as you read *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*:

What can you do when your dreams are taken away from you?

Story

Casey will have to do a lot of pet-sitting to earn the money she needs to buy Lightning, a beloved horse. But her hopes of buying Lightning are dashed when she learns that his owner must sell the horse immediately—and she has already found a buyer. Across the street from Casey's house, a mystery unfolds as a seldom-seen woman who seems to be able to read minds prepares to host a carnival and a yo-yo contest that boasts a \$1500 prize. Casey's yo-yo is buried in her closet. She has a great talent...and a greater case of stage fright.

Author

Nancy Belgue loves yo-yos and magic. In *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen* she found the perfect way to blend them together. Nancy is also the author of *The Scream of the Hawk*, a Silver Birch nominee for 2005, and *Summer on the Run*, both published by Orca. She lives with her family in Kingsville, Ontario.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts

- Have students write a screenplay for a movie of *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*. Limit characters to four, and be sure to include important elements of a screenplay, such as *screen headings* and *parentheticals* (see Screenwriting in the Online Resources section for more information).
- Assign students to design a promotional poster for the movie based on *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*. Posters should include the book's title and author, a listing of the major characters in the book (and the actors and actresses who will play them) and a short paragraph that summarizes the story.
- The yo-yo is an important item in Casey's quest to buy Lightning. Pair students up and task them to find out more about yo-yos: how they work, who invented them and interesting facts about them. Gather together as a class and share your findings.
- Haiku is a descriptive type of Japanese poetry. Have students create and illustrate a haiku poem describing either a character or a place in the book. The haiku form follows:

rain smells fresh like snow	line 1 — 5 syllables
leaves drinking sweet nighttime dew	line 2 — 7 syllables
moist air cools my face	line 3 — 5 syllables

- Have students write a newspaper article about a significant event that occurred in *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*. Pre-teach the inverted pyramid style, and model for students how to lead with the main parts: who was involved; what, when and where the event occurred; why and how it happened. Start with the most important information at the beginning of the article, leaving supporting details closer to the end. The final part of the article should be a look ahead at what might happen next.

Social Studies

- Throughout history, horses have had a place of prominence within the human landscape. Divide students into several small groups. Assign each group a different historical time period. Each group must research that time period to reveal the importance of horses in that culture and age.
- Casey keeps a lucky horseshoe in her pocket. In Ancient Egypt, cats were thought to bring good luck. Find other examples of good-luck charms in history. Have students share stories about their own good-luck charms. How did they decide a certain object was lucky for them?

- Discuss basic needs in the context of *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*. While a carnival certainly isn't a need, it is a mechanism that helps people to meet their social needs. Discuss. Can students think of other examples of human activities that, while they don't satisfy a physical need, provide for our social or psychological needs?
- In partners or in groups, have students research the history and significance of fairs and the circus. When did these events first begin? And why do they persist?

Art

- French realist painter Rosa Bonheur painted a famous picture called *The Horse Fair* in 1852. American painter and printmaker Bev Doolittle painted *Hide and Seek* using a technique which hides the horse within the frame. Share the work of these artists with students and have them draw or paint a horse picture in the style of one of these artists.
- Have students create posters advertising the yo-yo contest, incorporating a scene from the book as a background for the poster. Then ask students to arrange a display of the posters in the order the events occur.
- Create pictures that illustrate a scene from the book using fingerprints as the medium. Examples of such pictures can be found in books by Ed Emberley or online at Fingerprint Crafts, for example.
- Yo-yo construction kits may be purchased from craft or science supply stores. Provide each student with a kit and have them create a unique design on their yo-yo. Once they have constructed their yo-yos, hold a contest similar to the one Casey enters.

Science

- Forensic science is the study of evidence found at a crime scene, which is then used to solve the case. Set up a forensic mystery in your classroom. Provide students with clues such as a hair sample, a button or piece of fabric and a shoe print. Have them work in groups to analyze the evidence and come up with a suspect. Other forensic science lessons may be found on the Discovery School site (see Online Resources).
- In *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*, Mickey collects fingerprints to solve the donut mystery. Provide a water-soluble inkp pad or paint for students to take their own fingerprints. Have students then display them and see if they can guess each others' prints. Use this as a platform to launch a discussion of how fingerprints form one of the most important aspects of a forensic investigator's case.
- Fingerprints are unique to each individual. They come in three basic shapes: the whorl, the loop and the arch. Provide students with a variety of fingerprint samples and have them classify them using the Henry System of Identification chart (named after Sir Edward Richard Henry).

- Sir Edward Richard Henry, Sir Francis Galton and Dr. Henry P. DeForrest are three pioneers of fingerprint identification. Task students to find out more about their contributions along with others in the field.
- Patterns in nature can be as telling as human fingerprints, especially through the microscope lens. Collect a variety of specimens such as plant pollen, a leaf, insect parts and onion skin. Have students observe and draw the pattern or fingerprint for each item. You may also try different types of leaves or onions, for example, to see if there are pattern similarities.

Drama

- Mickey wants to spy on Mrs. Lombardi to find out what she is up to. Divide students into groups and have them create short skits illustrating how this might turn out.
- Several yo-yo tricks are mentioned by name in *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*. For example: around the world, Eiffel Tower, split the atom, eye of the needle and loop the loop. Divide your class into groups and assign one yo-yo and one trick per group. It is the responsibility of the group to learn the yo-yo trick and share their learning with the rest of the class. Make sure the tricks are done safely.
- Casey loses the yo-yo contest even though she was sure she would win. Being a gracious loser is difficult. Make a list of situations where this might occur. For example: contests of any kind, a raffle, speeches or sporting events. Have students show how both a gracious and an ungracious loser would behave.

Connecting to the Text

- Examining the setting: A variety of different machines are delivered to the new neighbor's house in preparation for the carnival. There's a tent and a stage too. Have students imagine how the carnival site is laid out in Mrs. Lombardi's backyard. Draw a picture of the site. Include machines, booths, tables and any other items they feel might be there.
- Have students plan and create a timeline that shows the main events in the novel. Encourage students to be creative—use popsicle sticks, cardboard rolls, adding machine tape, fabric, beads, cotton balls—whatever medium best depicts the story's development. Each story element must include a summary and an accompanying illustration.
- The author develops each character in the book differently. Have students choose one character they didn't particularly like and write a paragraph about him or her explaining their reasoning. In another paragraph, ask students to draw some inferences about why that person might behave the way s/he does. Finally, have students provide specific examples of how they could change that character to be more likeable.

- Nancy Belgue uses similes to enhance the description in *Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen*. For example: “Her face looked like a piece of cracked china” and “She felt like a pinball in Mrs. Lombardi’s machine.” Have students find five more similes from the book. Divide a page in two and illustrate each simile both literally and figuratively. Then, using these as starters, have students write their own similes relating to events from the book and illustrate them.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Casey takes on a fair amount of responsibility when she looks after people’s pets while they’re gone on vacation. Think of the things you are responsible for taking care of in your life. What are they? Do you think you have more or less responsibility than Casey?
2. Casey is devastated when she hears that Lightning is to be sold. She decides to try to get the money to buy him. But just because something is for sale doesn’t mean one has to purchase it. Do you think buying Lightning is a good idea? Make a list of the pros and cons of the possible purchase.
3. It takes courage to stand up in front of a crowd and give a performance. Have you ever experienced stage fright? Were you able to calm your fears? Explain.
4. Casey is frustrated because Deirdre doesn’t even want Lightning—whereas Lightning is the only thing in the world that Casey wants! Describe a time when you have wanted something that someone else has.
5. When Casey goes to say goodbye to Lightning, she senses that he knows she’s saying goodbye. Do you think animals have a certain ability to understand what’s happening? Explain your reasoning, using examples if you have them.
6. What is the significance of Casey and Mickey’s new neighbor, Sybil?
7. Using a Venn diagram, compare this story to a similar one that you have read. How are the stories similar? How are they different?

Author's Note

Dear Reader,

Like most people in the world, I find performing in front of an audience to be a pretty frightening experience. The first time I had to make a speech, I couldn't eat for two whole days ahead of time. Yet, after I'd done it, I realized that I not only did a good job but I actually came second in my town's public speaking competition. Overcoming that fear was a big moment in my life. It is also a very vivid memory. I can still feel my knees crashing together (couldn't everyone see and hear them?), taste the dryness in my mouth and hear the quiver in my voice. I wanted to write about overcoming a fear that big, so I gave Casey Little a gigantic case of stage fright—then I made winning a yo-yo contest her only hope of saving her beloved horse, Lightning, from the clutches of a mean-spirited girl who wants to buy him and move him far, far away.

When I was growing up, I lived near an old lady that everyone thought was a witch. I used to like to imagine she was some kind of fairy godmother, a person with a direct link to the fairies of the earth, and someone who could make good things happen. For Casey, I invented a mysterious new neighbor, a magical woman who seems to know everything Casey's thinking—a woman who comes into her life just when she's needed and helps Casey learn many things. Things like overcoming stage fright and trusting that sometimes things work out just the way they are meant to—even if it's not the way you expect.

Casey Little—Yo-Yo Queen is all about belief. Belief in yourself, and belief in the goodness of others, and belief in (just a little) magic!

Sincerely,
Nancy Belgue

Resources**Books***Fiction*

- Applet, Kathi. *The Thunderbird*
 attema, martha. *Hero*
 Baker, Cathy. *Seneca*
 Belgue, Nancy. *The Scream of the Hawk; Summer on the Run*
 Brett, Jan. *Fritz and the Beautiful Horses*
 Caseley, Judith. *Bully*
 Christopher, Matt. *Skateboard Tough*
 Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *Sherlock Holmes*
 Ghent, Natale. *No Small Thing*
 Henry, Marguerite. *King of the Wind*
 Hood, Susan. *Tyler is Shy*
 Hoffman, Alice. *Horsefly*
 Jackson, Melanie. *The Summer of the Spotted Owl*
 Kroll, Steven. *That Makes Me Mad!*
 Mammano, Julie. *Rhinos Who Skateboard*
 Morrison, Toni and Slade Morrison. *The Book of Mean People*
 Mullins, Patricia. *One Horse Waiting for Me*
 Odanaka, Barbara. *Skateboard Mom*
 Pearson, Emily. *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed*
 Polacco, Patricia. *Mrs. Mack*
 Richemont, Enid. *The Magic Skateboard*
 Sewell, Anna. *Black Beauty*
 Spalding, Andrea. *White Horse Talisman*
 Tate, Nikki. *Jo's Triumph*
 Thacker, Nola. *The Skeleton on the Skateboard*

Nonfiction

- Ball, Jackie. *Forensics* (614)
 Budd, Jackie. *The World of Horses* (636.1)
 Cole, Simon. *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification*
 Fridell, Ron. *DNA Fingerprinting: The Ultimate Identity*
 Harvey, Bev. *The Horse Family* (599.66)
 Innes, Brian. *Forensic Science* (363.2)
 Kallner, Donna Jackson. *The Wildlife Detectives: How Forensic Scientists Fight Crimes Against Nature* (363.2)
 Klutz. *The Klutz Yo-Yo Book*
 Maclay, Elise. *The Art of Bev Doolittle*
 Parker, Janice. *Forgeries, Fingerprints and Forensics* (363.2)

Price, Olive M. *Rosa Bonheur: Painter of Animals*
Roper, Ingrid. *Yo-Yos: Tricks to Amaze Your Friends*
Wiese, Jim. *Detective Science: 40 Crime-Solving, Case-Breaking, Crook-Catching Activities for Kids* (363.2)
Zeiger, Helene. *World on a String: The How-To Yo-Yo Book*

Online

The Six Pillars of Character
www.charactercounts.org/defsix.htm

How Yo-Yos Work
www.entertainment.howstuffworks.com/yo-yo.htm

Discovery School Forensic Science Lessons
<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/forensics.html>

How Fingerprint Scanners Work
www.computer.howstuffworks.com/fingerprint-scanner.htm

Henry Fingerprint System
www.biometricgroup.com/Henry%20Fingerprint%20Classification.pdf

Ken's World on a String, a Yo-Yo Page
www.kwos.yoyoing.com

FBI Kids Investigate
www.fbi.gov/kids/6th12th/investigates/investigation.htm

A Brief History of Skateboarding
www.skateboard.about.com/cs/boardscience/a/brief_history.htm

Screenwriting
www.screenwriting.info

Fingerprint Crafts
www.familycrafts.about.com/od/fingerprintcrafts/index_r.htm

Horses in History: In Fact and in Fiction
www.holycross.edu/departments/history/avlapomar/horses.htm

Famous Horses in Mythology and Literature
www.petcaretips.net/famous-horses-mythology-literature.html

Anatomy of the Horse

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equine_anatomy

PBS Horses

www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/horses/introduction/3153

Artist Rosa Bonheur

www.lilithgallery.com/arthistory/realism/Rosa-Bonheur.html

Forensic Science

www.pbskids.org/dragonflytv/parentsteachers/tguide_forensics.html