

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Nasty, Stinky Sneakers

by

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Book Information

Eve Bunting, Nasty, Stinky Sneakers
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Will ten-year-old Colin find his missing stinky sneakers in time to enter The Stinkiest Sneakers in the World contest?

Award: Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

Topics: Humor/Funny, Funny; Mysteries, Lost Items; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 1-3; READNOW - Perma-Bound, Perma-Bound - Read Now Grades 4-6; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - Grades 4-6 (Theme: Friends and Family); Sports/Recreation, Contests/Games

Main Characters

Amy Kyle Colin's seven-year-old sister

Colin Kyle a ten-year-old boy who wants to enter a stinky sneaker contest

Hubbel and Eddie the garbage truck drivers

Jack Dunn an entrant in the stinky sneaker contest who doesn't follow all the rules

Mr. Sabaton Colin's grouchy neighbor, who owns a finicky bull dog named Bruno

Webster Colin's friend, who helps him prepare for the stinky sneaker contest

Vocabulary

abomination a hated object

fastidious extremely delicate or culturally refined

sacred holy

vulgar crude

Synopsis

Colin Kyle has decided to enter the Stinkiest

Sneakers in the World contest in his town. His friend, Webster, helps him prepare the shoes for the contest. The contest winner will receive three pairs of sneakers. Colin plans to give the extra pairs to his sister, Amy, and to Webster. Colin's parents don't have much extra money, and he is hoping to save them money by winning this contest.

In preparation for the contest, Colin has not washed his feet for days, hasn't worn socks with his sneakers, has worn the shoes to bed, and has jogged for hours wearing the shoes. The night before the contest, Colin sets the shoes outside his family's apartment. Webster is worried that they will be stolen, but Colin assures him that no one would touch them and says that his mother will not allow the shoes in the apartment until bedtime.

When Webster leaves, he sees that the shoes are gone. The boys suspect the grouchy neighbor, Mr. Sabaton, who owns a bull dog named Bruno. Mr. Sabaton denies any involvement. The boys do convince him to use Bruno as a bloodhound to track down the shoes. Bruno leads them to Jack Dunn, another boy who is entering the contest. When confronted, Jack also denies he was involved with the shoes' disappearance.

Convinced that Jack is the thief, the boys steal Jack's shoes while he is playing baseball at the park. They hide the shoes in a crack in a brick wall at the end of an alley. They plan to return Jack's shoes when Jack returns Colin's shoes. The boys head home for the night. When Colin arrives home, he learns that his neighbor, Mrs. Knight, took and washed the shoes to thank Colin for being nice to her. Colin's shoes are ruined for the contest, but he has an even bigger problem -- he stole Jack's shoes.

Jack calls Colin, suspicious that he took the shoes. Colin admits what he did but says that his parents will not let him return the shoes until morning. Reluctantly, Jack agrees to wait. Webster and Colin plan to get up early to retrieve the shoes and return them to Jack before Jack's older brother, Shrike, beats them up.

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In the morning the boys are shocked to find the shoes gone from the wall in the alley. They learn that the shoes were taken by the garbage collectors. The boys and Amy catch up with the garbage truck, and the drivers, Hubbel and Eddie, reluctantly allow them to search for Jack's shoes. When the kids find the shoes, they head off to the park to return them to Jack.

The kids arrive at the park in time for the contest. In an attempt to win, Jack and Shrike pour liquid that smells like rotten eggs on the shoes. This is against the rules since it is "out-of-the-ordinary stuff." Jack proceeds to the judging line.

Colin notices that Poppy Roginski is entering the contest. Colin has a crush on Poppy and hopes she wins. The judges, impressed by Poppy's shoes, ask her how they became so smelly. She tells them it was from cleaning the duck pens at her family's farm. The judges are also impressed by Jack's shoes and ask him the same question. Jack lies and tells them he also lives on a farm. He says it is his job to gather the eggs and that his shoes also picked up odor from the fish in the creek at his parents' farm.

After conferring, the judges declare Poppy the winner. The crowd boos Jack when he shows poor sportsmanship. Colin tells Jack he looks forward to entering the contest next year and then congratulates Poppy.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Colin, Poppy, and Jack did a wide range of things to make their sneakers stinky. What could you do to make your sneakers stinky?

Making the feet sweat or standing in bad-smelling material would do the trick. Prolonged wearing of a pair of sneakers could cause them to gather odors that no one would want to go near.

Literary Analysis

Why did the author use many details about how disgusting the shoes were and how they got that way?

Many young boys and girls like to read about gross and disgusting things. These details appeal to that audience while also being funny. Any child who has a good sense of humor would enjoy a book like this. The author also seemed to be trying to appeal to readers who have wild imaginations.

Inferential Comprehension

What do you think might have happened to Colin and Webster if they had not returned Jack's sneakers in time for the contest?

Jack and Shrike made definite threats that they would hurt Colin and Webster. Whether they would follow through on those threats is unknown. Some kids are tough with words but don't actually back up their words with actions. However, the author would have us believe that Jack and Shrike were the kind of kids who would make good on their promises. Amy was probably right that Jack and Shrike wouldn't have done anything to them in front of all the people at the park. They probably would have waited for a chance to find Colin and Webster all alone before taking revenge.

Constructing Meaning

How do you think most readers felt when Colin saw Poppy at the contest and thought she was "as pretty as an Easter egg"?

Most readers were probably amused. In addition, readers may have predicted that Poppy would win the contest.

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Teachable Skills

Understanding Characterization Bruno was a sensitive and fastidious bull dog. It seems that he was this way because his owner, Mr. Sabaton, had these qualities. There is a saying that people often resemble their pets. Have students bring in drawings, photographs or descriptions to see how well this statement applies with pets of their families or friends.

Recognizing Cause and Effect When Bruno was tracking the odor of Colin's shoes, the kids put a blindfold on him to cut out the visual distractions. Have your students try the same experiment. Bring in a number of items with familiar odors and have the students try to identify them while wearing blindfolds. This activity could be extended to other senses as well. By blocking off, or impairing, one sense, the children can see how it affects their other senses.

Recognizing Feelings When Colin's mother heard that his shoes had been washed and knew he wasn't going to be able to enter the stinky sneaker contest, she brought him his favorite dessert for supper -- apple cobbler. Ask the students to write about a similar experience when they were feeling sad or upset and how someone tried to cheer them up.

Responding to Literature In this story there were some characters who did things that were not quite right. Colin stole Jack's shoes because he thought Jack had his shoes. Jack broke the contest rules in an attempt to win. Have a class discussion about cheating and stealing. Ask the students whether Jack and Colin were justified in what they did, whether they would have done the same things, and what the characters could have done instead of cheating and stealing.