

Barbara Mauch – St. Monica School – bsm265@earthlink.net

YNBA Novel Resources

Jennifer Richard Jacobson

Winnie at Her Best

Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006

Mrs. Jacobson never set out to be a writer, but she did keep a diary. She went to be a school-teacher. When she was teaching her first class of 1st graders, she started writing books. When she had her first book signing, some of them came, they were seniors in high school. She has published many picture books, The Winnie series is for the younger grades. She has just written her first young adult, book.

Winnie has been honored by Publisher's Weekly, chosen for many other states' lists similar to Young Novels in Indiana. Her first adult book is an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, and a New York Library Book for the Teen Age.

Author: www.jenniferjacobson.com

Publisher: www.simonsays.com/content/destination.cfm?tab=3&pid=353770



ANNOTATION: Winnie is a sweet young lady, whose mother is dead. She has two best friends who leave her out a lot. Winnie works hard to keep up with them. This book was very enjoyable and easy to read. We understand Winnie because we have all felt left out sometimes.

GENRE: Fiction (Friendship)

POINT OF VIEW: Third Person

THEME: Feeling Included with her group of friends.

CONFLICT: Internal conflict because she has to decide what to do, so that she can be the best at something, and the deadline for the art contest is just two weeks away. .
External conflict because John is assigned to her and doesn't want her help.

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION: She feels prickly when her friends are the “Best.” Winnie decides to enter the art contest. She works in secret because is afraid of not being the best like her friends. She enters and wins second place. Her relationship with John Stuart improves and she is able to help bring him out of his shell. He becomes a reader with her help. She comforts him when his mother is rushed to the hospital.

CHARACTERS: Fourth Grade: Winifred Fletcher, only child, mother has died. Her friends: Vanessa, actress—Zoe, speller, Mr. Fletcher, her dad who is a teacher and helps her—John Stuart Godowsky, a kindergarten student, the best runner, but very shy.

SETTING: Pettingil School in modern times

INTEREST LEVEL: 3rd to 6th grades **READING LEVEL:** 4.4

BOOKTALK: This book is appropriate for 3rd and 4th graders. How many of you have a big sister or brother that is just the best? Their grades were better than yours, they can sing better or do lots of other things better too? Do you have a friend like that? Well, in this book, Winnie has two really good friends that are the best. One is an actress, and the other is the best speller in the whole school. Winnie is feeling left out. And to top it off, she is assigned a very strange kindergartener to work with. Everyone else gets the neat and friendly kids. How will Winnie help this little boy and what will she do to feel better about herself?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Pre-reading

Chapter 1. Does Winnie like standing and spelling in front of the room? Page 1

Chapter 2. Are Winnie, Vanessa and Zoe really good friends? Page 6

Chapter 3. What kind of art will Winnie try to draw? Page 15

Chapter 4. Does Winnie think that John will like the Dinosaur book? Page 18

Chapter 5. Do Winnie and her friends go to the library often? Page 22

Chapter 6. Will John like the other kindergarten books? Page 31

Chapter 7. Does Winnie think that Zoe will win the school contest? Page 34

Chapter 8. How will Winnie decide what to draw? Page 39

Chapter 9. Does Winnie miss her friends? Page 48

Chapter 10. What does Winnie do to her picture to make it look better? Page 55

Chapter 11. Will Winnie have the courage to ride the bus by herself? Page 60

Chapter 12. Will Winnie be able to help John and his mother? Page 65

Chapter 13. Will Winnie stay and go to the hospital with John? Page 69

Chapter 14. Will John’s mother get better?

Chapter 15. Why are Mr. Fletcher, Winnie and John walking together? Page 82

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: During reading

Chapter 1. What is the word that Zoe’s spells correctly to win? Page 5

Chapter 2. What makes her friends that she is a good tumbler? Page 8

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- Chapter 3. What does Winnie include in her first still-life? Page 15
- Chapter 4. Where does Winnie find John that first day? Page 20
- Chapter 5. Does Winnie go to the children's room in the library? Page 25
- Chapter 6. What does Winnie think of John? Page 32
- Chapter 7. How does Winnie know that Zoe is worried about spelling? Page 34
- Chapter 8. What is John watching on television? Will that help him read? Page 42
- Chapter 9. Why should Winnie quit erasing on her picture? 54
- Chapter 10. How did Winnie learn that she had won a prize? Page 59
- Chapter 11. What does Winnie hear when she is leaving? Page 64
- Chapter 12. What is it that the police man wants Winnie to do? Page 66
- Chapter 13. Why did Winnie choose to stay with John at the hospital? Page 73
- Chapter 14. How does John show Winnie that he has learned something? Page 77
- Chapter 15. Where do Mr. Fletcher, John and the three girls go on the next day? Page 84

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Post Reading.

- Chapter 1. How was Cynthia feeling after she lost the spelling bee to Zoe? P.5
- Chapter 2. What could she do to help her feel 'the best?' p.13
- Chapter 3. What couple of books does Winnie think that she will take and read with her buddy? Why can't she use them? P.16
- Chapter 4. What was John Stuart's reaction to the book? How did Winnie know that he liked it? P.21
- Chapter 5. What was one of Winnie's favorite things to do at the Library? What did she discover? P.23
- Chapter 6. Do you remember learning how to read? How did you do it? P.32
- Chapter 7. Why did Winnie tear up the list she made? P.37
- Chapter 8. How does Winnie get John Stuart to practice his letters? P.43
- Chapter 9. What does Winnie share with John Stuart? Why does he get angry? P.52.
- Chapter 10. What part did Vanessa have in the play? P.58
- Chapter 11. Why did the ambulance stop at John Stuart's house? P.64
- Chapter 12. Why does John Stuart feel about Winner? P.66
- Chapter 13. How does Winnie feel about not being at the Art Museum? P.72
- Chapter 14. Why did the little sad feeling creep into Winnie when she saw the red ribbon? P.80
- Chapter 15. Why does Winnie feel better about winning second place? Page 83

LANGUAGE: These are Zoe's spelling words.

1. margarine – a butter like substance made from corn oil.
2. mountainous – an adjective meaning looks like a mountain.
3. persnickety – to be very fussy
4. arduous – to work hard at something.
5. exacerbate – to make something worse

INDIANA STANDARDS:

- 3.2.1 Locating Information
- 3.2.6 Locate Problems and Solutions
- 3.3.3 Determine what the characters are like.

- 4.2.3 Recognizing Main ideas
- 4.3.2 Identify main event of the plot
- 4.3.3 Contract the actions, motives of the characters
- 4.3.6 Determine the theme

- 5.2.3 Recognizing Main Ideas
- 5.2.4 Draw inferences and generalizations
- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem and explain how it is solved
- 5.3.3. Contrast the actions, motives, of the characters.

ANTICIPATION QUESTIONS: True or False

1. Everyone is good at something.
2. Even good spellers have trouble standing and spelling in a bee.
3. Fourth graders working with kindergarteners is a good idea.
4. Just looking at a person tells you what kind of person he/she is.
5. Grade school child can help in a medical emergency by calling 911.

READ-ALoud PAGE

1. Chapter 4 – Pages 18-21- It is when Winnie meets John Stuart.
2. Chapter 12 –Pages 65-67- This is the passage when the ambulance arrives.

IF YOU LIKE THIS BOOK – YOU’LL LOVE

The Kids of Polk Street School, Giff

Showtime at Polk Street School: Plays you can do yourself, Giff

Just Juice, Hesse

Samantha Learns a Lesson, Adler

Mary Margaret and the Perfect Pet Plan, MacLean

Truly Winnie, Jacobson, Houghton, 2003

Winnie (Dancing) on Her Own, Jacobson, Houghton, 2001

Andy Shane and the Queen of Egypt, Jacobson, Houghton, 2007

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. Language Arts – The class has a Spelling Bee. Teacher should use a list she/he chooses.

Spelling Standards: 3.6.8 Spell correctly words of plural syllables

4.6.8 Spell correctly words with roots

5.1.2 Word Recognition

5.6.7 Spell correctly words with prefixes, suffixes.

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2. Life Skills – We have a class discussion about being kind to people who are the best and then being kind to the people who are different.

Use your character building program at your school. If you do not have questions: Why should we be kind to the people who are really good at something? Do you want a really good doctor, or a really good football player? We should encourage those people to be even better.

Why should we be understanding of someone who is different from us? How should we treat a person who is not smart, or handsome, or a good sports player? How would we like the others to treat us?

Standards: Health and Wellnes

Grade 3 3.4.1 Name effective non-verbal communication skills to enhance Health and wellness.

3.4.4 Ask for assistance with personal situation

Grade 4 4.1.1 Examine connections between behaviors and personal Health.

Grade 5 5.1.2. Identify examples of emotional, intellectual, physical and Social health.

RESOURCES:

For the spelling bee, the teacher has access to words that she can use for her/his class.

For the discussion on kindness and acceptance, use the character/value program that your school or district has chosen.

BOOK ACTIVITIES:

1. Work in pairs, using the dictionary, choose 25 words that you think will work for a class spelling bee. Make sure you know the meaning and can use it in a sentence.

Standard 1: Reading: Word Recognition 5.1.2

2. Research first aid for heart attacks on the internet or use a first aid book. Please list some of the symptoms and what should you do if you think someone might be having a heart attack.

American Red Cross – Training Manual

www.healthprofessor.com/landers/heart_disease.php?keywords=heart+attack

Health: 3.8.1 Share correct information about health issues

Health: 4.8.2 Illustrate how to assist others with their health issues

Health: 5.1.5 Describe when it is important to seek health care

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Heart Attack info: www.healthprofessor.com/landers/heart_disease.php?keywords-heart+attack

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