

Teacher's Guide for
Seventh-Grade Weirdo
by Lee Wardlaw

(This guide may be reproduced without permission for classroom use)

About the Book

Rob wants to start seventh grade with a whole new image. He wants to be known as an average, normal guy. But normal might be a little too much to ask because Robs has a problem: His family.

Rob comes from a family of weirdos. His five-year-old sister, Winnie, is a much-publicized, genuine genius. His mother adores Winnie-the-Pooh and proves it by driving around in a pink van painted with pictures of Pooh, Roo, Rabbit and Piglet. And his father, an ex-surfer, can't even speak without saying things like "stoked" and "awesome" – especially in front of Rob's friends.

Life doesn't get any easier on Rob's first day of middle school, especially when recognized by The Shark, the school bully. Rob's doomed to be the weirdo for the rest of his life – thanks to his off-the-wall family – unless he can come up with a brilliant plan. But when his sister winds up in a dangerous situation with The Shark, Rob discovers there's no such thing as being perfectly normal...

About the Author

Lee Wardlaw is the author of more than two-dozen award-winning books for young readers, including *101 Ways to Bug Your Parents* and *101 Ways to Bug Your Teacher*. She lives in Santa Barbara, CA, with her husband, teenaged son, and three cats – weirdos all, and proud of it.

Book Awards & Honors

Florida Sunshine State Young Reader Award (grades 6th-8th)

Texas Lone Star Book

Recommended, literatureplace.com

Recommended, *Literature Lures: using Picture Books and Novels to Motivate Middle School Readers*, by Nancy J. Polette

Recommended: *What Do Children Read Next? A Reader's Guide to Fiction for Children and Young Adults* by Candy Colborn

Recommended: *Books Children Will Sit Still For* by Judy Colburn

Recommended: *Reason to Read: Thinking Strategies for Life Through Literature, Volume 2* by Cathy Collins Block

Discussion Guide

1. Why does Logan, Rob's best friend, believe Rob is "pea soup-Christmas tree-seasick green with envy?" (p. 3) Would you be jealous? Is it harder to deal with envy with a family member or a friend? Why?
2. How does Rob's first day of middle school start? What of the many choices would be most embarrassing?
3. Rate the advice the boys get from Logan's brother. What goes wrong with following it?
4. Explain how things get worse for Rob in Mr. Wesley's class. What would you do? Does every school have bullies like The Shark?
5. Describe Jenner Thomas. Why is she important to the story? How does she complicate things for Rob?
6. Summarize the events of Chapter Six. What three things are most important to know or remember about the events?
7. Have you ever been put in a cooperative group like the one Rob is in for Social Studies class? Did you like it or not? Why? What do you think are the pros and cons of cooperative groups?
8. Explain how Rob ended up in a towel. Do you think this will be enough revenge for The Shark? Why or why not? How do things escalate between The Shark and Rob?
9. Describe what happened while Rob and Logan cleaned pools on the weekend. How do Rob and Jenner make a connection?
10. Explain why Rob was so embarrassed when the social studies group came over to his house to work on the project. Are kids always embarrassed by their parents and siblings? Give examples of how your family has embarrassed you in the past.
11. How does Rob handle his embarrassment? Would your mom let you stay home from school like this or not? What happened after school?
12. What deal does The Shark offer Rob? Would you take it? How are Rob and Winnie getting along? Why?
13. What decision does the social studies group make about The Shark and his threats? How does the rest of the day go for Rob? What does he discover when he gets home?
14. Explain why Rob is upset with Winnie after her adventure. What did she design this time? How would you feel if you had a millionaire as a sibling?
15. How does the principal handle Mike Sharkey's threats and the other incidents at school? Do you think Rob is safe?
16. Why is Rob's dad invited to speak at school? How would you feel in this situation? What does Jenner tell Rob? Would you rather live in an ordinary family or extraordinary? Why?
17. How does Rob lose his anger for his sister? Where does he direct it? What is the best way to handle a bully in school or neighborhood?

Activities

Reading/Writing

Good readers make predictions about what they think will happen next in the story. They base their predictions on evidence: what they know about characters and what they know about stories in general. As you read *Seventh-Grade Weirdo*, make a prediction at the end of each chapter about what will happen and why you think so.

Math/Logical

Design your own board game like Winnie! You may use elements of various games but it should have a unifying theme. Create a board, write the rules, and bring it to class to share. Do research online to learn about games that other teens have invented.

Art

Create an anti-bullying poster for your school. You may use any media you like (paint, collage, photography, etc.), but be sure to include the message that your school has zero tolerance for bullying.

Drama

Rewrite one of the scenes of the novel as a play or reader's theatre script. Perform it for your class or others. Be sure to study the standard format of a play to create a readable script.

Conflict Resolution

Psychologists believe that some kids become bullies because they, themselves, were treated in a mean or unfair manner by parents, relatives, teachers and others. Since learning to see another person's side is an important step in resolving conflicts, try to put yourself in The Shark's place. What types of things might he have experienced in his life for him to want to bully Rob? How could you help him to choose to act in new and better ways?

History

One of Rob's favorite historic figures is Patrick Henry. Research Patrick Henry and write a short biography about him. Include answers to the following questions: Who was Patrick Henry? What role did he play in the American Revolution? What did Henry mean when he exclaimed: "Give me liberty or give me death!" How did this statement influence Rob?

Just for Fun

Rob and his best friend, Logan, run a business called Those Pool Guys. Develop a business of your own and be sure to create a pamphlet that outlines your services and prices.

Literary Links

Dealing with Bullies

http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/school_stuff/bullies.html

What Kids Say About Bullies

http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/school/poll_bullying.html

Cyberbullies

http://kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/bullying/cyberbullying.html

Best Children's Books About Bullying

<http://www.best-childrens-books.com/childrens-books-about-bullying.html>

Kids Against Bullying

<http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/>

Teen Against Bullying

<http://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/>

National Bullying Prevention Month

<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/bpam/>

Biography of Patrick Henry

<http://www.history.org/Almanack/people/bios/biohen.cfm>

"Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death!" Patrick Henry's Famous Speech

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/fourth-of-july/give-me-liberty.html>

Pooh Corner

The only Winnie-the-Pooh website sanctioned by the Pooh Properties Trust

<http://www.poohcorner.com/A-Short-History-of-Pooh-and-Winnie.html>

"I've Invented a Board Game. Now What Do I Do?" by William Maclean

<http://www.amherstlodge.com/games/reference/gameinvented.htm>

Reader's Theatre Basics

<http://bms.westport.k12.ct.us/mccormick/rt/RTHOME.htm>



This guide was created by Tracy Vaughn Zimmer (with additions by Lee Wardlaw), a literacy specialist and children's author. Visit her blog to find hundreds of guides to children's and young adult literature:

<http://wildgeeseguides.blogspot.com/>