



***PICKLE: THE (FORMERLY) ANONYMOUS PRANK CLUB OF FOUNTAIN
POINT MIDDLE SCHOOL***

by Kim Baker

Illustrations by Tim Probert

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2015
Grades 3-5**

*Submitted by Ned Denby, student worker,
State Library of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA*

Title: *Pickle: The (Formerly) Anonymous Prank Club of Fountain Point Middle School*

Author: Kim Baker

Illustrator: Tim Probert

Publisher: Roaring Book Press

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SUMMARY

Between working in his parent's restaurant and starting his first year of middle school, Ben is having a hard time making new friends. His best friend Hector lives with his grandmother, the principle of Fountain Point Middle School, and tells her everything; Ben knows he can't be trusted. When Ben comes up with the idea to start a Prank and Trick Association (P.T.A., for short) disguised as a new school organization, the League of Pickle Makers, he carefully selects students with skills, connections, and, above all, the ability to keep a secret. Frank has computer skills. Bean's parents own a costume shop. Oliver is the lead in the school play. Sienna is a complete unknown, but she's very pretty, and she smells like flowers, which is enough for Ben. When one of the P.T.A. pulls a prank that's just a little too much, the principle shuts down activities for the school, and Ben and the rest of the P.T.A. have to decide whether to save their own skins or confess.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Like the main character of her debut novel, Kim Baker spent quite a bit of time getting to know the principle of her school. She lives in Seattle with her husband and two children. *Pickle* is a 2013 SCBWI Crystal Kite West winner and a finalist for the 5th and 6th grade Children's Choice Awards.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://kimbakerbooks.com/KCB/More.html>,

Accessed August 27, 2014.



ILLUSTRATOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Tim Probert is an illustrator living in New York City with his wife and two cats. He has worked in animation production and illustrated for children's books, magazines, and advertisements. His work has been featured in the Citrus Cel Animation Festival, the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators Bulletin and Illustration Age.

Biographical information taken from the illustrator's website

<http://timprobert.com/contact.html>,

Accessed August 28, 2014.

AWARDS

2013 Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Crystal Kite West winner

2014-2015 Texas Bluebonnet Award Nominee

Children's Choice Book Awards 5th-6th grade finalist

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice 2015 Nominee

Junior Library Guild Selection

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Author's website <http://kimbakerbooks.com/KCB/Home.html>

Illustrator's website <http://timprobert.com/>

OTHER TITLES BY ILLUSTRATOR

New York, Phew York by Amber Jones (2012)

A Whole New Ballgame by Phil Bildner (2015)

RELATED TITLES (Students may also enjoy these titles)

Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliett, illustrated by Brett Helquist

Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library by Chris Grabenstein

Liar & Spy by Rebecca Stead

The Mysterious Benedict Society (Book 1) by Trenton Lee Stewart, illustrated by Carson Ellis

The Schwa Was Here by Neal Shusterman

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Science:

- Make pickles with students. <http://www.pickyourown.org/makingpickles.htm>
- Try pickling different kinds of vegetables. The link for making pickles with students has links to other recipes for different options. The book's website has some recipes, too: <http://www.picklesforever.com/#blog/fizzy>
- Ben and the P.T.A. try to make pickled eggs; try dissolving the shell from an egg with vinegar. <http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/eggs/activity-naked.html>

Social Studies:

- History: Ben finds out that some of the first pioneers were Mexican. What other groups are not often represented as pioneers? African Americans, Asian Americans, South American, etc. <http://oregonblackpioneers.org/historybriefs.htm>

- Students could study the origins of different cities to find out who founded them and how they were developed. Students can find lists of the 50 and 100 largest cities in the United States and pick a city to look up.
- To get their extracurricular activities back, the whole school rebels by hosting a kind of sit-in/protest. Talk about the Civil Rights Movement and what sit-ins were. <http://www.sitins.com/story.shtml>
- Collaborating: Lots of schools have started their own chapter of the League of Pickle Makers. Have the students, either as a class or in groups, plan a mild prank to pull on another classroom (especially one that has read the same book). Then sign up the group on the book's website: <http://www.picklesforever.com/#chapters>

Writing:

- Ben and his friends use an online translating service to write to each other in other languages. This is a form of exchanging coded messages. Have students pair up or get into groups and translate a short message into code, send it to another group, and translate their new message back into English. This website has some examples: <http://kidsactivitiesblog.com/27282/secret-codes-to-write-a-coded-letter>
- Here is another set of ciphers that are a little more complicated: <http://listverse.com/2012/03/13/10-codes-and-ciphers/>

Art:

Theater: Oliver is the lead in the school play. Have students break into groups and act out their favorite scenes from the book.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Ben assumes things about Hector based on what Hector has done in the past, and is proven wrong. When have you assumed something about someone and been wrong?
2. Why is the League so careful to keep both adults and other students from finding out any of their secrets?
3. One of the themes of the book is trust. Who do you trust? Why? What would make you stop trusting that person the way Ben stops trusting Hector?
4. Is it fair for Principle Lebonsky to punish the whole school for the actions of one person? What about after the P.T.A comes clean?
5. It can be fun to play pranks on other people, but it can be scary or upsetting to have pranks played on you. Playing pranks maliciously can also be bullying, which you never want to do. Ben and the others are careful to only play pranks that will let other people play along. What are some other ideas for pranks and tricks that will let everyone have fun?
6. Why did Hector tell his grandmother that he and Ben were responsible for the graffiti outside their apartment?

RELATED WEBSITES

Pickles Forever

<http://www.picklesforever.com/>

Site of the League of Pickle Makers.

Clubs and Organizations – Get Involved!

<http://k6educators.about.com/od/helpfornewteachers/a/startclub.htm>

Ideas for clubs to start at your school.