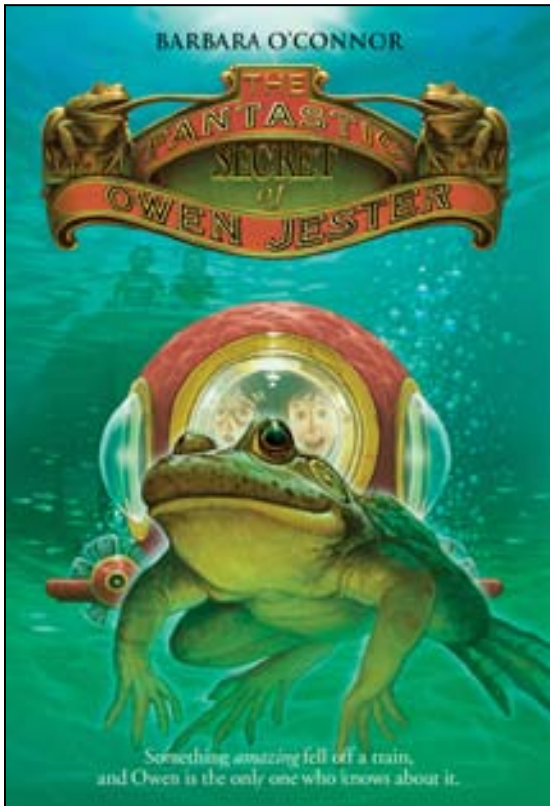




A Teacher's Guide for *The Fantastic Secret of Owen Jester* by Barbara O'Connor



Grades 3 to 7
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Owen Jester wishes his family hadn't moved to his grandfather's house in Carter, Georgia, after his dad lost his job at the hardware store. For one thing, his grandfather's live-in nurse, Earlene, sure knows how to ruin anyone's idea of a good time. And then there's Viola, the bossy, know-it-all girl next door, who can't ever keep her nose in her own business. She even thinks Owen should put his freshly captured bullfrog, Tooley, back into Graham Pond. Who would go to all the trouble of catching the biggest, greenest, slimiest, most beautiful bullfrog in the whole world just to let it go? Owen vows to stay as far away from Viola as possible. Then late one night, he hears unusual noises coming from the train track in the woods below his grandfather's house. Something mysterious and wonderful has fallen off the train. But when Owen finally discovers what it is, he realizes he just might need a know-it-all after all . . . Can Viola keep the most fantastic secret to ever tumble into Carter, Georgia?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara O'Connor is the author of fourteen novels and biographies for children. Drawing on her South Carolina roots, Barbara's novels have a distinctly Southern voice. Her books have received many awards, including the Massachusetts Book Award and Parents' Choice Award, and have been nominated for young readers' awards in thirty-eight states.



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PREDICTION

Have you ever kept a really great secret? How hard is it to keep a secret when you're excited about something? Who would you trust to keep your secret? Who would you definitely not want to share it with?

CHAPTER 1

Vocabulary

hunkered, miserable, colander, tumbleweed

Comprehension

Describe Owen Jester's life in Carter, Georgia.

Prediction

What did Owen hear?

CHAPTER 2

Vocabulary

pudgy, hedge

Comprehension

Explain who Tooley is and why Owen is worried about him.

Prediction

Will things get better or worse with Viola?

CHAPTER 3

Vocabulary

trampling, examine, muttered, unusual, lurking

Comprehension

Describe how Owen's life has recently changed. Why is it harder for him now than it used to be? What's the worst part?

Prediction

Will Owen find what fell off the train?

CHAPTER 4

Vocabulary

rickety, gauge, clenched, luau, tiki, canteen, enormous

Comprehension

Why does Owen say the word "rocket" suddenly? Why does he want to do this?

Prediction

Will Travis and Stumpy help Owen look? How do you know?

CHAPTER 5

Vocabulary

tromped, gloomy, clatter

Comprehension

What things did they find? What did they not?

Prediction

Will Tooley be fine or will he get sicker?

CHAPTER 6

Vocabulary

yammered, trudged, baling wire, huddled

Comprehension

Explain why Tooley needs a new cage.

Prediction

Will Viola tell on them for being mean? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 7

Vocabulary

admired, liable, mangy

Comprehension

List the steps Owen and the boys took to make Tooley happy.

Prediction

Argue for or against the idea that Owen and Viola could ever be friends.

CHAPTER 8

Vocabulary

deserving, lunged, evade, persistent, infested

Comprehension

Explain who Earlene is and why she makes Owen's life more difficult.

Prediction

Will the cage make Tooley happy and healthy? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 9

Vocabulary

nudged, nigger, tangle, gape

Comprehension

Why do Travis and Stumpy quit looking? How is Owen rewarded for his persistence?

Prediction

What do you think it is?

CHAPTER 10

Vocabulary

scraggly, scattered, ravine, leeches, solemnly

Comprehension

What did Owen find? What clues best help lead him to it?

Prediction

What will they do with it?

CHAPTER 11

Vocabulary

flourish, gnarly, appetite, signaling

Comprehension

What is keeping Owen from showing his friends the sub?

Prediction

How long will Owen have a secret? Why? Why is it so hard to keep a secret?

CHAPTER 12

Vocabulary

chattered, instrument, gesturing

Comprehension

Would you be as excited as the boys to find it? What would you want to do? Who would you tell?

Prediction

What will Viola do? What will she say?

CHAPTER 13

Vocabulary

indignant, glumly

Comprehension

Why does Owen have a niggles about Tooley? Have you ever felt a niggles about something? What did you decide?

Prediction

What will Owen do about the sub? The frog?

CHAPTER 14

Vocabulary

disbelief, fiddle, hayloft

Comprehension

What's the plan?

Prediction

Will their plan be ruined? How?

CHAPTER 15

Vocabulary

submersible, gestured, aggravation, ambient

Comprehension

Does Viola know everything or not? Should she brag about it?

Prediction

Will Viola tell? How will they keep her quiet?

CHAPTER 16

Vocabulary

convincing, scanning, scampered

Comprehension

Explain how the boys will get the sub to the pond. Will it work?

Prediction

What will Owen decide to do with Tooley? What makes you think this?

CHAPTER 17

Vocabulary

stormed, smug, gamble, relieved

Comprehension

Why did Owen ask Viola if she wanted to be involved?

Prediction

Will adults find out before they can get it into the pond? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 18

Vocabulary

linen

Comprehension

Who does Owen tell everything to at the end of the day? Who do you?

Prediction

What steps do they need to take for both the plan and the sub to work?

CHAPTER 19

Vocabulary

hacking

Comprehension

Why was Owen "sick of talking about getting the sub into the pond"?

Prediction

If Owen frees Tooley, how will Travis and Stumpy react?

CHAPTER 20

Vocabulary

annoyed, surface, peeping

Comprehension

Why do you think Owen finally decided to do what he did with Tooley? Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not?

Prediction

What will happen next? What makes you think this?

CHAPTER 21

Vocabulary

glared, glimpse, chomping, accusing

Comprehension

How did Travis and Stumpy take the news about Tooley?

Prediction

What is Viola's plan? Why does she know so much?

CHAPTER 22

Vocabulary

irritated, warped

Comprehension

Make a list of Owen's problems and put a star next to the one you think is most difficult.

Prediction

Will he figure out how to operate it? What clues do you have?

CHAPTER 23

Vocabulary

buoyancy, dramatic, rhythmic

Comprehension

Explain why Owen needs Travis and Stumpy to help move the sub. How does he convince them to return?

Prediction

If they get the sub to the pond, who do you think should get to drive it first? Why?

CHAPTER 24

Vocabulary

breaker, valves, struggled, patient, perched, scrambling

Comprehension

List the steps it took to move the sub to the pond.

Prediction

Will they be caught before they can try it? What makes you think this?

CHAPTER 25

Vocabulary

remove, adjusted, ballast

Comprehension

Did Earlene spoil their plans? Why do you think she's so crabby?

Prediction

Will they be successful? Is this a safe idea? Would you do it?

CHAPTER 26

Vocabulary

instantly, beaming, trembled

Comprehension

Who got first dibs inside the sub? Why? Did you think it was fair or not?

Prediction

What will they see? What might happen?

CHAPTER 27

Vocabulary

millisecond, manual, darting, magnificent

Comprehension

What did they see below and above the pond?

Prediction

Will they be punished? Will their parents be impressed? What would your parents do?

CHAPTER 28

Vocabulary

furious, splintered, dismantled

Comprehension

Who called Owen? Why?

Prediction

Will Viola and Owen be friends now?

CHAPTER 29

Vocabulary

arriving, telegraph, jabbed

Comprehension

What did Owen read to his grandpa? Do you think his mom will keep a copy even though Owen got in trouble for participating?

Prediction

Do you think this will be a story Owen tells his own kids one day? How might the story change as he gets older?

CHAPTER 30

Vocabulary

punishment, bulging

Comprehension

In the end, what and who have changed in Carter, Georgia?

Prediction

What adventure might Owen and his friends have next?

PROJECTS

READING COMPREHENSION

Good readers make connections to what they are reading. This means they think about how the story relates to something from their own life or someone they know. It could also remind the reader of another book, movie, or television show in some way. Making these connections helps readers stay tuned in to the story instead of letting their mind drift away. As you read the book, make at least two connections in each chapter. Write them on a sticky note and leave them on the pages where you connected. Then share the memories, connections, and ideas with a reading buddy.

WRITING

In Chapter One, Owen writes about three good things and three bad things about moving in with his grandpa. Write your own list of three good things, three bad things about something in your own life. Examples: playing soccer, being in the sixth grade, or learning to play an instrument.

HISTORY

It was the ancient Egyptians who finally inspired the answer of how to move the sub. Learn more about the Egyptians and how they influenced the future with all the techniques they used to build the pyramids. Draw a picture and explain what you learned.

ART

Create some type of three-dimensional art inspired by the story. It can be any shape (realistic in form or from your imagination) and color. For full credit you need to write a paragraph about your art piece and why you made the choices that you did.

SCIENCE

Graham Pond is an example of a freshwater biome. Research the food chain in an ecosystem as small as a pond and then draw a food web that shows how each organism helps the other to survive.

Research exactly what it is that Tooley needed to survive. Would he have continued to survive if kept in captivity?