Death By Toilet Paper

AUTHOR: Donna Gephart
PUBLISHER: Delacorte Press
COPYRIGHT DATE: 2014
GENRE: Realistic Fiction
LEXILE: 790

SUMMARY:
Benjamin Epstein and his mother have been trying to get by since his father’s death, but the bills are mounting. His mom’s job as a waitress doesn’t pay for what they need, let alone allow her to take the final exam to become an accountant. Benjamin’s attempts to win contests he enters or make money by selling candy seem to flop or get him into trouble. He feels as if he’s letting his father down.

BOOKTALK:
Money is tight for Benjamin Epstein and his mother since his father passed away. If only he could hit the jackpot with one of his sweepstakes’ entries, he and his mom could pay their bills and stop scrimping on the necessities of life, like decent toilet paper. But everything he tries to do to help with the family’s finances either fails or gets him into trouble. Will his family be thrown out of their apartment if Benjamin doesn’t find a way to make more money?

Since his grandfather moved in with them Benjamin begins to wonder if his older relative is losing his mind. Is this something else he should be worrying about? Will Benjamin hit the jackpot with his contests? Will his mom pass the exam to become an accountant so their money worries will be over? Check out Death by Toilet Paper and find out!

AUTHOR’S NAME: Donna Gephart

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Other books written by the author:
As If Being 12 ¾ Isn’t Bad Enough
My Mother is Running for President!
How to Survive Middle School
Olivia Bean, Trivia Queen

CHALLENGING WORDS

amendment (p.18)- noun - a change made by correction, addition, or deletion

eviction (p.46)- noun - the legal process of removing a tenant from a building

proximity (p.54)- noun - nearness
nonplussed (p.70) - adjective - so surprised or confused by an event that one does not know what to do.

complementary (p.88) - adjective - given for free

logical (p.158) - adjective - sensible or reasonable

formaldehyde (p.188) - noun - a chemical used to prevent decay in the dead bodies of people and animals.

protrude (p.190) - verb - to stick out

affidavit (p.209) - noun - a written report which is signed by a person who promises that the information is true

mannequin (p.216) - noun - a figure shaped like a human body that is used for making or displaying clothes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does Benjamin try to help the family’s financial situation?
2. From Benjamin’s point of view, what are the positive and negative results of having his grandfather live with him and his mom?
3. Even though Benjamin had some sad situations, the story has humor in it, too. What are some of the comical events in the story?
4. What themes come from the story that have to do with family? What themes are about friendship?
5. What do you think Benjamin learned during the story? How was he different at the end?

ACTIVITIES WITH STANDARDS:

Social Studies:

- Choose an activity you would like to do or an item that you would like to buy. List ways that you might earn or get money for this purchase and create a savings plan to show how long it will take you to save the money. Use an online calculation program like the one at RiverCityBankKids: http://kids.rivercitybankonline.com/savings-calculator/

  **Social Studies 4.4.10** Explain how people save, develop a savings plan, and create a budget in order to make a future purchase.

Media Literacy:

- Benjamin often entered contests for which he would create slogans or “jingles”.
Look for examples of advertisements in magazines, newspapers, on television, and online. List specific examples from these ads and which category in which they belong: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, or to transmit culture.

4.ML.1 Identify how information found in electronic, print, and mass media is used to inform, persuade, entertain and transmit culture.

Language Arts:

- Choose an event in the story and explain why it was important to the story and how it changed one of the characters. Use examples from the text, including quotes or character actions, to illustrate the change. Complete a character profile using the Profile Publisher.

4.RL.2.3 Describe a character, setting, or event in a story or play, drawing on specific details in the text, and how that impacts the plot.

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

The Mutter Museum - http://muttermuseum.org/
Benjamin’s best friend, Toothpick, loves this museum, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As part of the College of Physicians there, the museum showcases “anatomical specimens, models, and medical instruments” to educate visitors.

Fun facts, historical information, a timeline, and other features will give readers everything they ever wanted to know about toilet paper.

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