

***Riley Mack Stirs Up More Trouble* by Chris Grabenstein**

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Common Core State Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1](#) Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3](#) Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Questions To Use As You Read:

Prologue

1. What extremely strange message does Savannah receive from Jamal?
2. Why is Savannah in trouble? Do you think she should be in trouble? Explain.
3. What TV show contacts Mr. Ball?
4. Who are Briana Bloomfield, Jake Lowenstein, Hubert Montgomery, Jamal Wilson, and Riley Mack?
5. Why did Riley and his friends trick the assistant principal? Do you think they will be caught?

Chapters 1-5

1. What event is being planned at the golf course?
2. Where is Riley's dad?
3. Why does Briana need to win the talent show?
4. Who is Sara Paxton? What is she planning?
5. What did Sara and her friends do to Briana when seventh grade started?
6. What did Disco Dan tell Sara and her friends about skate maintenance? What do you think Sara is planning?
7. Should Briana help the fifth graders who are her competition? Explain.
8. What is Jamal's part in Operation Roller Disco?
9. What is Jake going to do with the surveillance cameras?
10. Who are Briana and Jamal going to pretend to be?
11. What does Jamal have to tell the "mean girls"?

Chapters 6-10

1. In your opinion, why does Prescott give Mr. Ball a “Scholar’s rate membership” at the Brookhaven Country Club?
2. What do you think of Prescott Paxton?
3. What happens to the six pairs of skates? Were you surprised?
4. How did Sara outsmart Riley and his crew?
5. What happened to Briana in Chapter 9? How would you feel if you were Briana?
6. How does Riley plan to get Briana into the finals at the country club? Do you think he will be successful?

Chapters 11-15

1. Explain Operation Granny Smith. Do you think it will work?
2. How does Briana become Mr. Peroni’s wild card pick?
3. In Chapter 12, what do Riley and his friends discover about Schuyler Pond?
5. What advice from his father does Riley remember on page 90? Do you think this advice is easy to follow?
6. Who is Miss Grabowski? According to her, what killed the fish?
7. Why does Riley take a sample of the pond water?

Chapters 16- 20

1. Who owns the forest? Who made it possible for him to own the land?
2. Who is cleaning up the dead fish in Chapter 16?
3. What is your first impression of Mr. Kleinman? Does he seem like a good guy or a bad guy?
4. How is Ron going to help Riley?
5. How is Riley going to figure out what is in the water?
6. What is uphill from the pond? What does that mean?
7. Why are Riley and Briana in disguise in Chapter 19?
8. What agency does Mr. Kleinman work for?
9. How does Riley use quick thinking to explain Briana’s disguise in Chapter 20?
10. What does Mr. Paxton “suggest” to Briana in Chapter 20?

Chapters 21-25

1. What is wrong with the men in Colonel Mack’s battalion?
2. What is General Joseph Clarke in charge of?
3. What is Operation Water Hazard?
4. What is brownnosing? Why is Mr. Paxton “brownnosing” General Clarke and Mr. Kleinman?
5. What are Gavin and his friends doing in Chapter 23?
6. Who do you think is responsible for the lawn care chemicals polluting the pond? Why?

7. What is Riley planning to do with the dead fish in Chapter 24? Is it a good idea?
8. Who is Mr. Sowicky?

Chapters 26- 30

1. Why is Mr. Paxton happy at the end of Chapter 26?
2. Do you think it is Riley's fault that Mr. Sowicky got fired? Explain.
3. Who are Larry and Curly?
4. What do you think is happening on the 18th hole?
5. What terrible secret does Mr. Sowicky reveal?
6. Why do they call the new operation "Operation Mulligan"?
7. What do you think Riley and his friends will do in Operation Mulligan?

Chapters 31- 35

1. Since the landfill isn't under the 18th hole, where do you think it is?
2. How does Riley trick Curly and Larry?
3. What do they find that looks like flour? Why do you think it is being buried?

Chapters 36-40

1. What does Briana (pretending to be Mr. Paxton) tell Curly and Larry to do?
2. What dangerous side effect is caused by the pancake mix?
3. Why did Mobile Meal Manufacturing use melamine and cyanuric acid in the pancake mix?
4. Why does Riley need to call his dad in Chapter 37?
5. Why is Riley's dad in the brig?
6. Do you think Riley's plan in chapter 39 will work?
7. Who is performing last, and what will they sing?

Chapters 41-45

1. How do Riley and Jamal get the camera in Chapter 41? Do you think the way that they got the camera was wrong? Explain.
2. Were you surprised by Mrs. Mack's reaction in Chapter 42? Explain.
3. What terrible news does Riley receive at the end of Chapter 45?

Chapters 46-50

1. Who saves the day in Chapter 49? How?
2. Who is in the six-foot-deep hole? Were you surprised when you read that?

Chapters 51 - Epilogue

1. What causes Mr. Paxton to reveal the truth about the pancakes?
2. According to the Epilogue, what happens to Mr. Paxton?

3. According to the Epilogue, what happens to Mr. Mack?
3. According to the Epilogue, what happens to Briana?
4. According to the Epilogue, what happens to Mr. Sowicky?

Vocabulary Words in Context:

Carefully read the examples below. Try to figure out the meaning of the underlined words by using context clues . Then choose the best answer.

1. Riley glanced at his watch. "It's two fifteen now. Let's reconvene at Jake's place at three thirty."

The word reconvene as it is used above means:

- a. eat
- b. play
- c. talk
- d. meet

2. "I've rigged up this phone to emulate the number Tony Peroni uses in his GigMasters listing on the web," explained Jake as he handed Briana a cell phone, which had a black wire dangling from it. "That acoustic coupler will feed your voice into this pitch modulator, so I can make your voice go deeper, to match Peroni's." (p. 75-76)

The word emulate as it is used above means:

- a. steal
- b. match
- c. borrow
- d. change

3. "And how about me? Is this a good look for me?"
"You look preposterous."
"Is that a good thing?"
"No. Lose the ascot and the wig."
"Gotcha. Less 'Richie Rich,' more 'Peter Preppy.' Thanks!"(p. 128)

The word preposterous as it is used above means:

- a. ugly
- b. rich
- c. ridiculous
- d. uncomfortable

4. "*Poor, poor man*, Mr. Paxton thought as a small, almost imperceptible, grin slid across his lips." (p. 164)

The word imperceptible as it is used above means:

- a. too difficult to see

- b. too hard to describe
- c. too nasty for words
- d. too fake to believe

5. "The least Prescott Paxton could do was suffer through the final tedious moments of this **interminable** talent show.

The word **interminable** as it used above means:

- a. impossible
- b. unusual
- c. seeming to be without an end
- d. unbelievable

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think Riley and his friends should have asked adults for help at any point in the story? Explain using examples from the story.
2. Do you think Riley's dad handled Riley's theft of the ice cream cake the right way? Explain.
3. In this story, Mr. Paxton "brown-noses" General Clarke and Mr. Kleinman. Are there any situations when brown-nosing actually works? Explain.
4. "Just deserts" is a phrase meaning "to get what one deserves." Is Mr. Paxton's an example of "just deserts?" Explain using examples from the story.
5. As fathers, do Mr. Paxton and Mr. Riley have anything in common? How are they different? Explain using examples from the story.

Understanding Similes:

Throughout the story, Chris Grabenstein creates several similes. (A simile is a comparison of two unlike things. A simile uses the words like and as to make a comparison.) Answer the questions below.

1. "Kid, you sing like a bird. The good kind, you know what I mean?" (p. 80)

What is the kid being compared to? _____ What word best describes this singer?

- a. whistling
- b. soft
- c. natural
- d. loud

2. Finally, a small bald man in glasses climbed out of the plain white car. **He looked like a timid mouse with a driver's license. (p. 123)**

What is the man being compared to? _____ What kind of driver is this man?

- a. small

- b. excellent
- c. unsure
- d. sneaky

3. "A woman who sort of looked like a mannequin was standing next to him in a sequined gown." (p. 268)

A mannequin is a life-size representation of the human body, used for the fitting or displaying of clothes. Who is being compared to the mannequin? _____

This simile means that the person being compared to the mannequin looks

- a. pretty
- b. young
- c. fake
- d. nice

Activities:

1. Write your own similes to describe the following words: spiky hair, smelly shoes, a crowded elevator, a noisy classroom, and a dirty dog.
2. Briana likes to invent words like fabtastic (fabulous and fantastic), torific (terrible and terrific), and fantabulous (fantastic and fabulous). Invent three words of your own and use them in sentences.
3. Riley's dad is his role model. Who is your role model? Write a letter to your role model explaining why you admire him or her.
4. Write a short essay on the following topic:

In this story, Riley and his friends have to use quick thinking to save the day.

- Find an example in the story that shows how Riley or one of his friends is able to think quickly in order to solve a problem. Explain what the character did, and show why his or her solution was a good one.
- Think of a time when you had to solve a problem. What was the problem, and how did you fix it?

5. Research the legend of Robin Hood. Write an essay showing how Riley Mack is like Robin Hood. Use examples from the story.