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Me and Rolly Maloo

Janet S. Wong • Illustrated by Elizabeth Buttler

Discussion & Activity Guide

Rolly Maloo is the most popular girl in school. Jenna would love to be her friend. So when Rolly asks Jenna to help cheat on a test, Jenna agrees—and gets caught. Should she tell on Rolly Maloo? Would you?

Janet Wong thoughtfully explores the issues of cheating, popularity, and integrity in this uniquely illustrated book, which combines a traditional novel format with design elements of a graphic novel.

Comprehension

1. In what way does Rolly Maloo think Jenna Lee is odd? Why does she think this?
2. Why is Jenna's mom skeptical about Rolly's phone call to Jenna? What is she worried about?
3. Why does Jenna think that Mrs. Pie is such a good teacher?
4. Why is the math test so important to Rolly Maloo and Patty Parker? What do they hope will happen if they pass?
5. Which students have the most problems with math in the class? Who thinks math is fun and easy?
6. What subjects does Principal Young say that students who need extra help in math must miss? What does Mrs. Pie think about this?
7. How does Jenna rationalize helping Rolly Maloo? What does she tell herself to feel better about her actions? Is there justification for her reasoning?
8. How does Jenna do on the test? Why does she get the score that she does? Who gets the highest score in the class?
9. Why does Patty think that Mrs. Pie will believe Rolly over Jenna?
10. What is the nickname that Shorn L. gives Rolly Maloo after the cheating incident? Why?
11. Why is Principal Young angry at Mrs. Pie? What does she demand Mrs. Pie do?
12. What does Mrs. Pie announce the day after the math test? What does she tell Jenna, Shorn L., and Hugo specifically?
13. How does Mrs. Pie investigate the cheating incident?
14. What is the punishment for Rolly Maloo and Patty Parker?
15. What does Jenna Lee's mother end up doing to make more money at the end of the book?

Did You Know?*

- 62% of students admit they lied to a teacher within the past 12 months about something significant.
- 60% of students have cheated during a test at school within the past 12 months—35% did so two or more times.
- 62% of students have copied another student’s homework.
- 59% of students agreed that, “In the real world, successful people do what they have to do to win, even if others consider it cheating.”
- 93% of students said they were satisfied with their personal ethics and character.
- 98% believe that “honesty and trust are essential in personal relationships.”
- 97% said, “It’s important to me that people trust me.”

Discuss

1. Ask students to take a moment to write down their definition of cheating, then discuss the different definitions as a class.
2. Ask students to come up with three different ways in which Jenna Lee could have reacted differently to the situation with Rolly Maloo. Possible answers include ignoring the note that was passed to her, writing back saying that she didn’t know the answer either, or telling the teacher.
3. Ask students how cheating is like stealing. Is there a difference between copying homework and copying tests? Why or why not?
4. Read aloud the statistics above. Ask students if they see any inconsistencies in what the majority of students *think* about cheating versus what they actually *do*. How does this relate to what Jenna Lee thinks about when she decides to help Rolly Maloo?
5. Ask students what they think the causes of cheating are. What kind of pressures are there on students to make good grades? Are there other pressures outside of just making good grades?
6. Do parents ever play a role in cheating? How? Think about how the parents in the story acted. What could they have done differently to help their children avoid cheating?
7. Write the phrase “Students who cheat in class are only cheating themselves” on the board. Ask students what they think this means. How can cheating lead to other problems?
8. Ask students to imagine that their best friend asked for help cheating on a test. What sorts of ways can they respond? Do you think Jenna would have reacted differently if Shorn L. had asked her to cheat? Why or why not?
9. Now ask students to imagine that the most popular student in school asked for help cheating. How would this situation be different? Would they respond differently to a popular student than to their best friend?
10. Ask students to think of a project that they have worked on that earned a good grade. How did they feel when they were working on it? How did they feel when they were finished? How would they have felt if they had let someone else copy their project?



* Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth © 2008 Josephson Institute.

Act

1. Take a secret poll. Using the statistics on page 2, create an anonymous YES or NO poll for students to take. (For example: 1. Have you lied to a teacher in the past 12 months about something significant?) Compute the statistics for the class and compare them to the national results. Discuss any differences or similarities.
2. Have students read the cheating policy of your school. Then have them compose a letter to your school's principal or newspaper discussing the policy. Instruct them not to make accusations, but instead write about how familiar they are with the policy, and whether it is up to date, especially with regard to the Internet. Are there clear reasons to revise or update the policy? What suggestions can be made to help other students be informed of the policy?
3. Have students write a note to Jenna Lee telling her what they would do in her situation before and after she's been caught cheating. What's the best way to resolve the problem? Should she simply come clean to Mrs. Pie? Should she talk to Rolly Maloo and Patty Parker? Ask the students to think creatively about problem-solving and to make more than one suggestion.
4. *Me and Rolly Maloo* features much dialogue. Have students choose a scene and read it aloud. (Suggested scenes: conversation between Rolly Maloo and Patty Parker on the playground after the cheating incident, the gossip between the students after Jenna Lee is caught cheating, or the conversation between Shorn L., Mrs. Pie, and Hugo.

Further Reading

Strawberry Hill by Mary Ann Hoberman

Junie B., First Grader: Cheater Pants by Barbara Park

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes

Blubber by Judy Blume





Janet S. Wong

Janet S. Wong was born in Los Angeles and grew up in Southern and Northern California. As part of her undergraduate program at UCLA, she spent her junior year in France, studying art history at the Université de Bordeaux. When she returned from France, Janet founded the UCLA Immigrant Children’s Art Project, a program focused on teaching refugee children to express themselves through art.

After graduating from UCLA *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in history, Janet then obtained her J.D. from Yale Law School, where she was a director of the Yale Law and Technology Association and worked for New Haven Legal Aid. After practicing corporate and labor law for a few years for GTE and Universal Studios Hollywood, she made a dramatic career change—choosing to write for young people instead. Her successful switch from law to children’s literature has been the subject of several articles and television programs, most notably an *O Magazine* article, a “Remembering Your Spirit” segment on “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” and the Fine Living Channel’s “Radical Sabbatical.”

Janet and her books have received numerous awards and honors, such as the International Reading Association’s “Celebrate Literacy Award” for exemplary service in the promotion of literacy, and the prestigious Stone Center Recognition of Merit, given by the Claremont Graduate School. Janet also has been appointed to two terms on the Commission on Literature of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Janet currently resides near Princeton, New Jersey, with her husband, Glenn, and their son, Andrew.

Visit Janet’s website at www.janetwong.com.