



## **Splat!**

Eric Walters

Interest level: ages ten to fourteen

Reading level: 4.4

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AR Quiz # 122469

### **Book Summary**

Keegan and Alex are the only kids in Leamington who haven't volunteered to help out with the town's annual tomato festival. In an attempt to teach them a sense of responsibility, their fathers put them in charge of the tomato toss. The boys decide it's their responsibility to add a little excitement to the event. They exchange the traditional wooden targets for human targets and, before they know it, they are running the most popular event at the fair. The excitement may be too much for the sleepy town, and soon the tomato toss is taken to the streets.

### **Author Biography**

**Eric Walters** is a best-selling author, teacher and social worker who also loves basketball. His many books for juveniles and young adults include these Orca titles: *Laggan Lard Butts*, from the Currents series; *Stuffed*, *Juice*, *Grind*, *Overdrive* and *House Party*, from the Soundings series.

## Connecting to the Text

### Vocabulary Enrichment and Reading Comprehension through Creative Work

1. The following words/terms are used in *Splat!*. Invite students to choose one of the following, working in pairs or small groups:

- Write a skit, poem or rap which incorporates at least six of the words listed below. Be prepared to perform your work in front of the class.
- You are a news reporter on the nightly news. Write a news report about the Tomato Festival in Leamington or create an imaginary story. Be sure to use at least six words from the list below.

above objection	(p. 16)	guilty	(p. 7)	private property	(p. 10)
agreement	(p. 77)	illegal	(p. 31)	public mischief	(p. 61)
alibi	(p. 7, 58)	immoral	(p. 31)	regret	(p. 8)
all-points bulletin	(p. 9)	impartial	(p. 62)	scheme	(p. 44)
assault	(p. 61)	interview room	(p. 7)	suspicious	(p. 3)
browbeat	(p. 7)	investigate	(p. 63)	testify	(p. 62)
confession	(p. 7)	kidnapped	(p. 3)	unbelievable	(p. 55)
dangerous	(p. 55)	official	(p. 77)	witness	(p. 7)
decisions	(p. 43)	police brutality	(p. 6)		

2. These words/terms are also used in *Splat!*.

business	(p. 13)	guarantee	(p. 44)	merchandise	(p. 64)
committed	(p. 12)	impressed	(p. 28)	persistent	(p. 11)
customers	(p. 72)	influence	(p. 8)	possibility	(p. 3)
dedicated	(p. 12)	interested	(p. 29)	responsibility	(p. 20)
encouragement	(p. 35)	leaders	(p. 13)	suggestion	(p. 28)

- Write a short story which incorporates at least six of the words listed above. Be prepared to share your work in front of the class.
- Imagine that you are either Alex or Keegan and you have been asked to write a report on what it was like to organize the tomato toss. Be sure to use at least six words from the list above.
- Imagine that you are organizing a store at your school. What steps will you need to take to make this happen? How many people will you need to help? What would you like to sell in your store? Prepare a skit wherein you talk about the experience. For example, you may wish to talk about your planning, the people who work and shop at your store, etc. Be sure to incorporate at least six of the words listed above in your performance.

### Connecting to the Characters and Plot

1. In *Splat!*, Alex and Keegan demonstrate both responsibility and irresponsibility. Invite students to identify responsible and irresponsible acts as they read the novel. You may wish to post two flipcharts, one labeled “responsible” and one labeled “irresponsible”. For example:
  - *Responsible*: planning and organizing the tomato toss; raising funds to build a new skateboard park; helping on the tomato farm; confessing and taking the blame; accepting the consequences of their actions.
  - *Irresponsible*: volunteering for an activity when it will be cancelled; locking Owen in the port-a-potty; tossing a tomato at Owen’s tuba.

When all students have finished reading the novel, lead a group discussion. Topics could include:

  - Do you think Keegan “got away with” pushing the port-a-potty over? Do you think that’s fair to Owen? If you were Owen, what would you do? How would you feel?
  - Alex says, “In a small town, it [is] pretty hard to escape your past” (p. 19). What do you think Alex may have done in the past that he now needs to “escape”? Do you think Keegan was involved?
  - Alex and Keegan were lucky that the food fight turned out to benefit their community, but it could have ended very differently. Imagine that someone in the crowd had been seriously hurt. How would the story have been different?
  - Alex and Keegan’s dads said the boys would be punished for what they did, “worse than you ever have in your entire life, no question” (p. 103). What do you think happened to them? If you were their parent, how would you punish them?
  - Sometimes Alex acts impulsively, joining Keegan in irresponsible (and sometimes dangerous) acts. Alex says, “There was only one thing to do” (p. 55) and “I didn’t want to, but I just couldn’t stop myself” (p. 61). Sometimes it can be very difficult to resist joining a friend, even when the friend is doing something wrong. How do you feel about Alex’s impulses? What could he do to resist joining Keegan next time?
2. Invite students to reflect on the following quotes taken from *Splat!*:
  - (p. 53) *...the pen is mightier than the sword*
  - (p. 63) *Tomorrow is another day*
  - (p. 82) *Sometimes you don’t appreciate what you have until it’s gone*
  - (p. 90) *This was going from bad to worse*
  - (p. 99) *The buck stops at my desk*
  - (p. 101) *...misery loves company*

What is meant by each of these expressions? Ask students to write a first-person paragraph, such as a journal or diary entry, that incorporates one of the expressions above.

### **Connecting to the Curriculum**

#### **Citizenship and Economics—Topics for Discussion and Exploration**

1. Alex and Keegan live in a small farming town called Leamington, famous as the “tomato capital of the country. Almost everything around here [revolves] around growing, canning or shipping tomatoes. And every year there [is] a big festival in town to celebrate tomatoes” (p. 15-16). In Leamington, many families and businesses are involved with tomato farming. This has an impact on their local economy, culture, identity and sense of civic pride.
  - Looking at your community, what forms the local economy? Does it impact the local culture and pride in your community? How do you know? Give examples.
  - Consider the journey of the tomato as it travels from the field to the grocery store, restaurant or family meal. How many occupations can you name on the tomato’s journey? Brainstorm a list. For example, farmer, picker, sorter, packer, production worker, driver, etc.
  - Can you buy tomatoes in your local grocery store or supermarket? How much do they cost and how are they measured? Which is more expensive, canned tomatoes or fresh, and does it change depending on what season it is? Were the fresh tomatoes grown locally or shipped to your store? How do you know?
2. Because Leamington is a small town, Alex says “Everybody [knows] everybody else” (p. 14) and “In a small town it [is] pretty hard to escape your past” (p. 19). As a group, discuss the pros and cons of living in a small community. Encourage students to share their experiences. When your list is complete, challenge students to think of ways that their classroom is like a “small town.”

**Splat! Word Search**  
**www.orcabook.com**

orca currents

d	s	b	i	n	s	t	r	u	m	e	n	t	s	f	g
t	h	d	c	s	x	m	n	o	a	i	k	j	h	n	v
c	t	c	l	e	d	s	c	f	s	e	m	w	i	p	l
m	o	b	g	v	f	f	t	f	c	x	s	h	e	e	g
i	o	l	i	o	u	y	h	g	o	t	g	c	f	r	x
r	b	t	g	d	w	s	a	z	t	u	n	l	k	f	h
a	u	d	i	e	n	c	e	c	a	e	m	l	p	o	i
d	t	b	i	o	k	p	l	l	n	h	y	b	g	r	r
m	r	d	c	s	f	e	s	t	i	v	a	l	h	m	e
i	a	c	l	e	d	t	c	f	b	e	m	w	o	a	c
s	d	b	g	p	a	r	a	d	e	x	s	w	e	n	n
s	i	l	i	o	u	y	h	g	v	t	d	c	f	c	a
i	t	t	l	d	w	s	a	z	x	m	n	l	k	e	r
o	i	f	a	i	r	g	r	o	u	n	d	s	p	o	t
n	o	t	s	p	e	c	t	a	t	o	r	s	x	f	n
n	n	i	u	s	t	n	a	t	s	e	t	n	o	c	e

admission	fairgrounds	mascot	audience	festival
parade	booths	floats	performance	contestants
instruments	spectators	entrance	laughing	tradition

**Splat! Word Search (Answer Key)**

**www.orcabook.com**

d	s	b	i	n	s	t	r	u	m	e	n	t	s	f	g
t	h	d	c	s	x	m	n	o	a	i	k	j	h	n	v
c	t	c	l	e	d	s	c	f	s	e	m	w	i	p	l
m	o	b	g	v	f	f	t	f	c	x	s	h	e	e	g
i	o	l	i	o	u	y	h	g	o	t	g	c	f	r	x
r	b	t	g	d	w	s	a	z	t	u	n	l	k	f	h
a	u	d	i	e	n	c	e	c	a	e	m	l	p	o	i
d	t	b	i	o	k	p	l	l	n	h	y	b	g	r	r
m	r	d	c	s	f	e	s	t	i	v	a	l	h	m	e
i	a	c	l	e	d	t	c	f	b	e	m	w	o	a	c
s	d	b	g	p	a	r	a	d	e	x	s	w	e	n	n
s	i	l	i	o	u	y	h	g	v	t	d	c	f	c	a
i	t	t	l	d	w	s	a	z	x	m	n	l	k	e	r
o	i	f	a	i	r	g	r	o	u	n	d	s	p	o	t
n	o	t	s	p	e	c	t	a	t	o	r	s	x	f	n
n	n	i	u	s	t	n	a	t	s	e	t	n	o	c	e

admission

fairgrounds

mascot

audience

festival

parade

booths

floats

performance

contestants

instruments

spectators

entrance

laughing

tradition

## Food Sciences

1. Tomatoes are very important in Leamington, the “tomato capital of the country.” Challenge the students to work in small groups and devise a menu for breakfast, lunch, snack-time or dinner containing dishes with tomatoes. You may wish to have a selection of cookbooks and magazines available for the students to view.
  - Design a menu which includes the dish(es) you’ve chosen. Be sure to include colorful appetizing pictures or drawings. For example, for dinner you could have tomato juice and lemon, chilled tomato and avocado soup, tomato wedges with salt and pepper, and pasta with tomato sauce.
  - Create a shopping list which includes the ingredients for your meal. How much will you need and how will you measure each item? How much will your meal cost? Can you buy all your ingredients in one place, or will you need to shop at a number of places? Will you need dried, canned, frozen or fresh ingredients?

Option: Have students vote on their favorite tomato recipe and, as a large group project, prepare and enjoy the meal together.

2. Keegan has to help on his family’s tomato farm. “We just have to move some tomatoes” he says to Alex, “some rotten tomatoes out of storage and into the compost...” (p. 32). Composting, the act of decomposing organic waste into useable nutrient-rich soil, plays an important role on any produce farm. As a science project, research composting by answering the following:
  - What kind of things can be put in a compost? What can’t? Make a list of the things in your classroom that could go into a compost and post it for students to see (for example, apple cores, orange peels, banana peels, etc.).
  - How does composting play an important role in reducing the use of landfills? Where can compost soil be used?
  - What happens to the ingredients in the compost? What kind of organisms help the process along?

Option: Create a mini-compost in your classroom. Ask students to record progress on a chart which is posted beside the compost. At the appropriate time, invite students to use the compost to enrich a school or community garden.

## Connecting to the Students—Ideas and Discussion Topics

1. Sometimes Alex and Keegan feel as though they live in the shadow of others. Alex’s father is the mayor of Leamington, and Keegan’s father is the chief of police. Alex’s sister has started her first year of university on a scholarship, and it seems that everyone thinks she’s “wonderful.”

- Mrs. Wallace says, “I’ve always predicted that girl would go far...She is so dedicated, so committed, so smart” (p. 12), and Alex’s Dad says, “I just want you to follow in her footsteps” (p. 17). Why do these statements upset Alex so much?
- Can you think of a situation where you felt uncomfortable being compared to someone else? Reflecting on those feelings, write a diary or journal entry and try to “get to the bottom” of them. What upset you?
- Write a letter to Alex, sharing your experience, and offer some advice to Alex on how to cope. For example, *Dear Alex, I know just how you feel...*

### **Connecting to the Wider World—Ideas and Discussion Topics**

1. Research the La Tomatina Festival, held on the last Wednesday of August in Bunyol, Spain. What is the history of this festival? Make a list of the activities that take place. Would you like to attend this festival?
2. Leamington’s tomato festival celebrates the importance of the tomato in the community. Research annual festivals or fairs in your state or province—or in another country. What kind of activities do they enjoy? How long does the festival last? Which festival would you like to attend? Examples could include: the Garlic Festival in Perth, Ontario, Canada; the Spring Valley Potato Festival in Spring Valley, Ohio; the Grape Festival in Naples, New York; the Orange Festival in Belle Chasse, Louisiana; or the Cheese Festival in Cape Town, South Africa.
3. Leamington’s Tomato Festival includes a beauty pageant. In recent years, beauty contests or pageants seem to be less popular than they once were and may be considered controversial. Why is that? Discuss the pros and cons of beauty pageants. What does it take to become a contestant? What does it take to win?

### **Web Resources**

**[www.latomatina.es](http://www.latomatina.es)**

Official website of the La Tomatina Festival, held in Bunyol, Spain. (Spanish only)

**[www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com)**

An excellent recipe-finding website. Simply enter the ingredients into the search function for numerous user-provided recipes.

**[www.nyccompost.org/program/classroom.html](http://www.nyccompost.org/program/classroom.html)**

New York City’s Compost Project—includes information and resources for starting a classroom compost.