



Horse Power

Ann Walsh

Interest level: ages ten to fourteen

Reading level: 3.5

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Book Summary

Once again, Callie is forced to take part in her mom's latest crusade. They head into ranch country to camp—bloodthirsty mosquitoes, stinky outhouses and all—at a protest to save a rural school. Callie's grandmother shows up with her biker buddies and the Singing Grannies. Callie hates camping and wants nothing to do with the protest. To make matters worse, Callie's only possible ally, her cousin Del, is mad at her. The last time Callie visited, she was thrown from Del's horse, Radish. Callie claimed the horse was vicious and now Del's parents are forcing her to sell Radish. Callie wants to help her cousin, but she's terrified of the horse. Del is just as tenacious as the rest of Callie's family, and Callie is forced to admit that she's not going to be allowed to go home until both the horse and the school are saved.

Author Biography

Ann Walsh is the award-winning author of many popular historical novels for children and young adults. *Horse Power* is her second novel with Orca Book Publishers. Ann has taught in elementary schools and at the college level. Her books have been nominated for major Canadian book prizes and all of them have been selected as "Our Choice" titles by the Canadian Children's Book Center. Ann lives in Williams Lake, British Columbia, with her husband.

Connecting to the Text

Theme and Point of View

When Callie suggests staying with her grandmother instead of joining her mom at the protest, her mom says, "...you know your grandmother's building has a rule about kids being there for more than a night. They do allow pets to live there, though...that's unfair. Maybe it's a human rights violation" (p. 8-9).

Working in small groups, assign each group one of these scenarios:

1. Consider this situation from the point of view of the building's owner or the council that oversees it. Is it fair to say that kids can't stay for more than one night? List two arguments that defend this point of view.
2. Consider this situation from the point of view of a tenant who wants their grandchildren to stay for more than one night. List two arguments that defend this point of view.
 - Encourage students to include qualifications in their discussions; for example, It is fair as long as...
 - Hold a group discussion, allowing each small group to share their point of view. Then, as a class, try to reach consensus—is this a human rights violation?

The school board wants to close Shady Glen School because it's too expensive to operate. The families in the community want the school to stay open because they don't want their kids to spend a long time on the school bus every day.

- To set the stage for this role-play, read pages 31 through 35.
- Prepare to act out this scene, so that each student represents the point of view of his or her character. Assign students to play the role of: the school board chairman; the principal; three teachers from the school; three parents of students in various grades; and trades people who can work on the septic system and the electrical problems. The remaining students in the class can play students from Shady Glen School.
- You may wish to use a community forum as the setting for your role-play. Ask students to describe their character's point of view. What are their interests? What would they most like to see happen with Shady Glen School?

Option: Bring copies of your school board's current agenda, if a public document, to class. Are there issues that the students can discuss?

Creative Wordplay

1. Callie's friend's name is Peter Dawl. "His mother wanted to call him Ken, but his father objected" (p. 2). Challenge the class to create other names which play on words. To get the class started, you may wish to share: Bill Ding, Sam Thing, Nick O' Time and Phil R. Upp.

2. Callie describes Ken's van as "so old it looked as if it had been used to deliver ice back in the days before refrigerators" (p. 3). Challenge students to write similar sentences, either using the samples below or creating their own. You may wish to lead a lecture on simile and hyperbole. How does use of simile and hyperbole engage the reader in the story? How does it connect us to the characters?

Callie doesn't like horses. To her, riding a horse is like _____.

There was a lot of homework this weekend! As much as _____.

The dirty gym socks were as smelly as _____.

The drumming was as loud as _____.

It's a long way to take the bus to the city school. It will feel like _____.

The Singing Grannies were great! One day, maybe they'll be _____.

We found an old lunch bag in an empty locker. It looked like _____.

The substitute teacher's voice was _____.

The books on the library shelf looked _____.

When it rains, the coat room in our class is _____.

We don't know what they were cooking in the cafeteria, but _____.

Connecting to the Characters

1. Although Callie and Del are cousins and close in age, they don't naturally get along. This may be because they don't have a lot in common, but it is also because Del laughed when Callie fell off Radish.
 - It's not easy to become friends with someone who has laughed at you. Can you think of time when this happened to you? How did you feel? Were you able to get over it and become friends with that person? Write a diary or journal entry, describing the situation, or write a letter to Callie and share your experience with her.
2. Callie's mom loves to be the center of attention and is happy to be interviewed for the newspaper, or on live television.
 - Imagine that you are Dian Powers and you are being interviewed on live television. A reporter from the CBC has arrived to ask you questions about the protest. Act out the scene with another student.

3. Callie feels sad for Del when she learns that Del's family has to sell Radish. Have you ever had something you loved taken away? It can be difficult to cope in this situation. Write a paragraph, poem or song which addresses this theme.
4. The Powers family has a tradition in which they name all the girls in the family after flowers. Callie's full name is Calendula; her mom's full name is Dianthus; her grandmother's name is Rose; her aunt's name is Geranium; and her cousin's name is Delphinium. Does your family have a special tradition? As a large group, share some of the traditions that make your family special. Why are traditions so important to us?

Connecting to the Story through Creative Exercises

1. A lot happens at Shady Glen School after regular school hours. As Callie learned, "The Girl Guides and the 4-H Club used the gym. The Duplicate Bridge and the Whirling Seniors met here. On Wednesday evenings, a group of writers used one of the classrooms, while the Woman's Auxiliary... met in another room" (p. 38-39). Imagine your school or classroom as a suitable space for something other than your classes' studies. What could your classroom be used for? Your cafeteria, library or gym? Draw a map or picture of your classroom or another room in your school, indicating how the room could be used in a new way.
2. Imagine a group which meets in your classroom at night. You may wish to choose from one of the groups that meets at Shady Glen School. Write a diary entry or first-person narrative about the person who sits at your desk. What do they do? Where do they come from? What can they tell about you by your desk?
3. Imagine your class meeting in a different setting. How would your learning experience be different? Make a list of four possible places (don't discount any locations as 'silly') and then choose one that interests you. Write a paragraph describing your school day. Examples to try: a supermarket, a hotel lobby, a garden shed, a store that sells furniture, a zoo, an artist's or dancer's studio, a barn, a movie theater, etc.
4. The protesters make signs to get their message across. They wrote: Save Shady Glen School! and Don't sell our school! and Education is priceless; schools are worth any price. Design signs which demonstrate your school spirit. What are some of the things in your school that are worth cheering about?

Horse Power Word Search

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

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|--------------|----------|----------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| barbecue | exposure | outhouse | sarcasm | culture | feud |
| publicity | scenery | discrimination | indignantly | rattlesnake | |
| spokesperson | drumming | mosquito | repellent | stirrup | |

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Horse Power Word Search - Answer Key

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

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|--------------|----------|----------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| barbecue | exposure | outhouse | sarcasm | culture | feud |
| publicity | scenery | discrimination | indignantly | rattlesnake | |
| spokesperson | drumming | mosquito | repellent | stirrup | |

Connecting to the Curriculum

Life Skills and Personal Planning

1. Callie and her mom must live in a tent while they are protesting the closing of the school. Although Callie thinks of camping as only “cold nights, snoring mothers, bloodthirsty mosquitoes [and] stinky outhouses”, camping can be fun. If you were going to camp at your school for two nights, what would you need to do to prepare?
 - Encourage students to make a kit list which includes each item and where they will get it. Kit lists could include: tent, tarps, rope, foam mat, sleeping bag, pillow, first-aid kit, bug repellent, etc.

Option: Make a menu and shopping list for your two-night camp. What food do you need to bring? What dishes and utensils? How will you store it safely?

- Encourage students to consider their camp in different seasons (What would you pack for a summer camp? A winter camp?)
 - When students have finished, hold a group discussion so that they may share their findings. How much will the camps cost? Would you like to try camping? If so, are there local sites you'd like to visit?
2. Callie doesn't like to try new things, but her mom says that doing something new makes you a more rounded person and enriches your life (p. 17). Unlike Callie, Dian is always trying new things.
- Encourage students to think of something they have always wanted to try. Examples could be: trying out for a team; joining the drama club; organizing a movie or fashion club at your school.
 - You may wish to present this as a private exercise—indicate to students that they don't have to share their goal with the large group unless they want to.
 - Ask students to write an action plan to achieve their goal, including the steps they will need to take, the timeline, and any resources they will need. You may wish to present the acronym "SMART" to help students prepare the steps for their goals. This acronym is commonly used in business and management, but works well for any goal-setting: S-specific, M-measurable, A-attainable, R-realistic, T-timely. Discuss each letter in the acronym as it relates to goal setting.

Option: Decide on a goal as a class, and work together to achieve it. For example: nobody is late to school for a month; everyone gets at least one half-hour of exercise each day for two weeks; the class has a potluck lunch every second Friday for a whole term, etc. You may wish to decide on a reward if the goal is achieved, such as enjoying popcorn and a movie on a Friday afternoon.

- After the exercise, discuss the goal-setting process. Encourage students to share what they learned about setting goals. Can they apply these techniques to other areas in their lives?
3. Del is a member of her community's 4-H club. Ask students to research the 4-H Club organization, answering the following:
- What do the four H's stand for? What is the 4-H pledge?
 - Describe the history of the 4-H Club.
 - What kind of projects do kids in 4-H Clubs engage in? Give two examples.
 - Can anyone join a 4-H Club? Is it open to kids from rural areas and kids from urban areas?

Connecting to the World—Ideas for Discussion and Exploration

1. Callie and her mom enjoy the First Nations drumming circle at the protest. As a class, try a drumming circle. If you don't have drums, try different sized plastic containers—everything from a food container to a garbage can. You may want to assign a student leader to set the drumming tempo and rhythm, with each student following in turn. Debrief the exercise afterward. Was there something special about everyone making the music together?
2. In *Horse Power*, the Singing Grannies arrive to support the protesters who are trying to save Shady Glen School. The Singing Grannies are based on a real group called The Raging Grannies. In 1987 in Victoria, Canada, a group of older women peace activists who called themselves the Raging Grannies protested the presence of a nuclear submarine in a Canadian port. The “Grannies” rowed a kayak out to the submarine and caught media attention around the world. There are now Raging Grannies organizations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and Greece.

Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to choose from the questions below. Have them complete the questions and present their findings to the class.

1. Research the Raging Grannies. What is their mission or goal? How do they achieve this?
2. Create a collage of images of Raging Grannies. How are they different from other protesters or activists? Give examples.
3. The Raging Grannies use costumes, signs and music to get their message across. Pretend that you are protesting an issue in your community and create a poster. Decide first what issue your poster will address: it could be a local issue such as school rules, uniforms, curfews, etc., or a global issue such as pollution or global warming. Present your poster to the class, talking about the issue and the methods you used so that your poster gets your message across.

Web Resources

www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/pdf/music.pdf

“First Nations Music in Canada,” a booklet published by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Includes information on First Nations music, drumming and a fun First Nations kids’ game. See the “Kids Stop” section of the website for additional resources, including the Inukshuk story and information on history and language.

www.4husa.org 4-H of USA

www.4-h-canada.ca 4-H of Canada

www.scouting.org Boy Scouts of America

www.girlscouts.org Girl Scouts of America

www.scouts.ca Boy Scouts of Canada

www.girlguides.ca Girl Guides of Canada

www.ymca.net YMCA of America

www.ymca.ca YMCA of Canada

www.bgca.org Boys and Girls Clubs of America