



Blob

Frieda Wishinsky

Reading level: 2.9

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AR Quiz # 136645

Book Summary

It's hard enough for Eve to adjust to a new high school without the extra weight she's gained over the summer. Her best friend is ashamed to hang out with her, and she's become the focus of a schoolmate's cruelty. Determined not to be "that pathetic fat girl" at school, Eve struggles with a diet and forces herself to join a mentoring program. The diet only makes her food-obsessed, and she feels she is failing as a mentor. How can a lonely fat girl gain the confidence she needs to succeed?

Author Bio

Frieda Wishinsky takes her inspiration for *Blob* from the summer she worked as a counselor. She worked with some tough teens and cheered herself up by visiting the local Dairy Queen—often. Frieda is the award-winning author of over forty books for young people, including *Queen of the Toilet Bowl* in the Orca Currents series. Frieda lives in Toronto, Ontario.

Connecting to the Text*The Writer's Craft*

1. Frieda Wishinsky prefaces each chapter with a quote relating to the story. Discuss the topics below.
 - ♦ Why do you think the author does this? What does it add to the story?
 - ♦ Does one particular quote resonate for you? Why?
 - ♦ Do you know any quotes that you relate to? (They could be famous quotes or lines from movies, books, tv shows, or song lyrics)
 - ♦ Create your own inspirational quote and share it with the group. One option is to write about something you know, starting with a familiar saying. For example, if you like sports: *Always keep your eye on the ball, in life and on the court.* And if you like music: *Walk to the beat of your own drum and you'll be in perfect time!*
2. Similes make a comparison between two things, using words such as *like* or *as*. Read the following examples from *Blob* aloud, or write them on the board. Ask students to create an inventory of similes found in *Blob* by writing them on the board. After everyone has finished the novel, discuss each example.

(ch. 1) *I feel like a herd of horses are stomping through my chest.*

(ch. 2) *I walk slowly. Each step feels like a mile.*

[Zoe is] *as skinny as a snake and just as poisonous.*

Option: Ask students to compose their own similes using the prompts below. Encourage students to make connections to the novel, where possible.

- Those cookies are so tempting! But if I eat them, I know I'll feel like a _____.
- The new diet is hard. Everything tastes about as good as _____.
- When I walked downstairs, I could tell my teacher was angry. She looked like _____.
- Outside it was as dark as _____.
- As part of my new exercise regime, I'm running every day. My lungs feel like _____.
- The Girls Helping Girls club is great. When I meet the new girls, I try to be as friendly as _____.

Connecting to the Story—Chapter by Chapter

1. Ask students to respond to the questions below, following the completion of each chapter. Responses could take the form of a short journal entry or notes, or as part of a large group discussion.

(ch. 1) Why do you think Sarah is treating Eve differently? How do you think their friendship will change now that they are in high school?

- (ch. 2) How will Eve cope with Zoe's rude comments?
- (ch. 3) Do you think that Eve will eat lunch by herself all year? Will she make any new friends?
- (ch. 4) How do you think Eve's new diet will go?
- (ch. 5) Do you think Eve will be able to stick with her diet? Which clubs do you think she will join?
- (ch. 6) Why do you think Eve's mother gave her the food-addiction articles to read? Was that the right approach?
- (ch. 7) Why do you think Eve bought the chocolate bar?
- (ch. 8) Do you think Zoe's mother will mention Eve to Zoe? Will Eve be able to stick to her diet, even on Day Four?
- (ch. 9) What will happen at Girls Helping Girls? Will Eve like it?
- (ch. 10) How do you think Girls Helping Girls will affect Eve? Will she find a girl to mentor that she can help? Will the girl help her too?
- (ch. 11) Do you think Eve will stick with her diet, even after breaking it?
- (ch. 12) Why do you think Stephanie ran out of the room? Do you think she will come back?
- (ch. 13) Why do you think Stephanie says she isn't coming back to the program? Do you think Eve will ever see her again?
- (ch. 14) What has changed for Eve in how she responded to the note on the locker?
- (ch. 15) Do you think Eve will be able to make Stephanie feel better about her problems? Do you think Eve will finally confront Zoe about her behavior?
- (ch. 16) Respond to the novel as a whole. What did you think?

Connecting to the Characters

The following topics are suitable for paragraph writing exercises or group discussion.

1. Eve sometimes eats in unhealthy ways. When she describes her job at the convenience store, Eve says, "Every time the owner barked at me, I ate...A double chocolate cone always cheers me up." In this example, she connects eating unhealthy foods with a feeling comfort.
 - ♦ What are some activities you would suggest Eve try when she's feeling bad or is stressed? (*Prompt:* talk to the school counselor, join a club, call the 1-800 help line for kids, go for a run, etc.)

2. Early in the novel, Eve recalls how she treated a girl from middle school named Annie Lucas. Eve said: "Annie was tall and fat...I used to feel sorry for her, but I never tried to be her friend. I never said anything more than hello to her. I wasn't mean or anything, but I ignored her."
 - ♦ Is ignoring someone mean? How do you think Annie felt when Eve ignored her?
 - ♦ Now that Eve is being treated like Annie was, do you think Eve would treat Annie differently? How do you know?
 - ♦ Have you ever felt the way Eve felt? What did you learn from that experience? Did it change the way you treat others?

Option: A little kindness can go a long way. Decide to perform one random act of kindness a day for a full week. Keep a journal in which you write about your acts of kindness. How did they go? How did performing your act of kindness make you feel? (Ideas for random acts of kindness could be: invite someone who is often left out to join your group at lunch; help a classmate with homework; offer to help with chores at home; donate used clothing to a shelter.)
3. Early in the novel, Eve wonders why Sarah would want to be friends with Zoe, since Zoe isn't a very nice person. What is attractive about Zoe? If you could give Zoe advice, what would it be? Imagine a novel in which Zoe learns about herself, like Eve did. What happens?
4. Throughout the novel, Eve mentions the words willpower and temptation. She says, "It takes all my willpower not to charge into the kitchen and grab a cookie."
 - ♦ Find examples in the novel where Eve mentions her willpower. What is her attitude toward willpower, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
 - ♦ Have you ever had to exercise willpower? What advice would you give to those who are having trouble beating a bad habit?
5. Throughout the novel, Zoe bullies Eve by calling her hurtful names like "fat" and "awful." The comments take a toll on Eve. Topics for paragraph writing exercises or group discussion:
 - ♦ Think of examples of bullying that you've seen on TV or in movies, or have read about in a book. How were the bullies portrayed? How did they affect the characters around them?
 - ♦ Why do you think it's important to speak out against bullying? If you or someone you know is being bullied, who can you ask for help? What can you do to speak out against bullying in your school or community?

Topics for research or report exercises:

- ♦ What resources are available to help children who are being bullied in your school? Make a list of these and create a poster which displays them. Hang the poster somewhere kids will see it.

Topics for personal reflection and journal writing exercises:

- ♦ Have you ever been bullied? How did it make you feel? Can you relate to any of the feelings that Eve has in *Blob*?
- ♦ Have you ever been a bully? Many of us have at some point in our lives, sometimes without meaning to, like Eve did with Annie. Try to think of a time when you were rude to someone or made fun of them. How do you think this made them feel? If you could apologize now, what would you say?
- ♦ What do you think has made Zoe so mean? Is there any “excuse” for her mean behavior? What can she do to become a nicer person?

Connecting to the Curriculum

Art

1. Frieda Wishinsky prefaces each chapter with a quote relating to the content of the chapter. Ask students to choose a quote and create an art project (drawing, collage, etc.) which demonstrates how the quote connects to the story.
 - ♦ For example, chapter one's quote is: “*I never forget a face, but in your case, I'll be glad to make an exception*” (Groucho Marx). This could connect to how Eve feels about Zoe; i.e., she doesn't like Zoe and wishes she could forget how Zoe's mean comments make her feel.
 - ♦ Another example is at the start of chapter 3: “*If you let a bully intimidate you, he's going to do it again*” (Charles Djou).
2. In art class, Eve is assigned a project to design an advertisement for her favorite food. Challenge students to the same assignment, creating posters which advertise favorite healthy food items. Ask students to include slogans prompting customers to make healthy choices.

Option: Ask students to make a skit TV commercial or radio jingle version of their advertisement.

Health and Personal Planning

1. Ask students to research the USDA Food Pyramid or the Canada Food Guide, responding to one of the topics below.
 - ◆ How does your diet stack up to the Food Pyramid? Do you eat as many fruits, vegetables and dairy products as the Food Pyramid suggests you should? If not, how can you incorporate more healthy choices into your daily diet?
 - ◆ If your school has a lunch program or operates a cafeteria, how does it stack up to the Food Pyramid? Are there ways it can be improved?
 - ◆ Keep a food log for five days. Include what you eat during the day for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. Compare your results to the Pyramid's recommendations. What are your strengths? Weaknesses? Can you improve your eating habits?

2. In chapter 4, Eve says she read that “if you need to clear your head, you should close your eyes, take deep breaths and think of nothing.” Ask students to work in small groups to create posters that advertise relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing, using daily affirmations or journaling. Ask them to include step-by-step instructions so students can try the techniques.
 - ◆ Examples for journaling: write a letter you'll never send; pick a word randomly from the dictionary and respond to it.
 - ◆ Examples for yoga: research healthy and safe yoga positions that are easy to learn. Include the name and picture of the pose, how long to hold it for, and what it's meant to accomplish. Be sure to include any safety precautions (such as using a mat and making sure there is ample room) so that yoga is safe and fun for all students.

3. Eve mentions in chapter 1 that she is nervous about starting high school, especially because her family has just moved to a new neighborhood. She “knows almost no one”. Ask students to complete the following, either in pairs or small groups.

Brainstorm, with one student acting as a scribe:

 - ◆ Imagine a time when you were the “new kid.” (*Prompt:* new to a school or club, at a party or event, on a team, meeting extended family, etc.) How did it feel?
 - ◆ Before going into the new situation, what did you hope would happen? (*Prompt:* I hoped people would be friendly, I hoped I wouldn't feel embarrassed, I hoped I wouldn't look stupid, etc.)

Research:

 - ◆ How are new kids introduced to your school and class? Make a list. (*Prompt:* new kids meet the school principal, counselor and home-room teacher, and then they are introduced to the class. The teacher usually asks a student to show them around the school).
 - ◆ What would be the best way to make new kids feel welcome?

Action Items:

- ♦ As a class, decide which ideas are do-able, and create a plan for making them happen. One idea is to create a “welcome package,” with a greeting card that kids in the class all sign, a map of the school, a class picture with names beside the pictures, etc.

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

In the novel, the Girls Helping Girls program is a school-run club that pairs together high-school and middle-school students so the older girls can help the younger ones with problems they may be facing. There are trained counselors available to help the girls.

- Participating in the program gives Eve a lot of confidence, and she also makes a new friend. As a research project, ask students to find out about the following:
 - ♦ Is there a group like this in your school or community? If so, bring information about it to the class and share it in an oral presentation. Find out if there are resources such as posters, pamphlets, a phone number or website, and display them in a prominent location in the classroom.
 - ♦ If not, is there a way that students could start their own club, with supervision by an appropriate faculty member? Ask students to be clear about the purpose of the group; i.e., it's a place where kids can feel safe to discuss the problems they may be facing in high school, middle school or elementary school, with peer learners. Once students have formed ideas and created plans, encourage them to “pitch” their ideas to the appropriate school staff.

Web Resources

Canada's Food Guide and Healthy Living website. There is an excellent educator's section, with many free resources available. Note that the Food Guide is available in many languages, including English, French, Farsi, Chinese, Spanish, Punjabi and more. There is also an interactive “My Food” guide, for personalizing the Guide.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php

United States Dept of Agriculture's website for healthy eating and activity, using the Food Pyramid. See the Specific Audiences/Kids 6-11 section for games, activities and classroom materials.

www.mypyramid.gov