

Trading Places with Tank Talbott

by Dori Hillestad Butler

Teacher's Guide

Note from the Author:

I never took swimming lessons as a preschooler or elementary school student. When I was in fifth grade, I realized I was going to have swimming in gym the following year and I was going to be the only kid who didn't know how to swim. So I asked my mom to sign me up for swimming lessons. I had no idea it was going to be so hard to learn to swim at age 10. Like Jason, I couldn't put my face in the water. I remember how it felt to be the oldest kid in swimming lessons, how it felt to be the only kid who couldn't put my face in the water, how it felt to fail beginning swimming lessons time after time. That was where the idea for *Trading Places with Tank Talbott* began.

Pre-reading Activity:

Look closely at the cover art. What kind of book do you think this is going to be? What do you think is going on in the picture? What does the art tell you about the two main characters, Jason and Tank?

Prediction Guide:

- Ch. 1 Do you think Jason will ever learn to swim?
- Ch. 2 Do you think Tank is really taking a basketball class?
- Ch. 3 Do you think trading places is going to work out for Jason Tank?
- Ch. 4 We didn't get to see what happened in the swimming class. How do you think Tank behaved there?
- Ch. 5 Do you think Jason's mom suspects anything?
- Ch. 6 How do you think Dagmar will get back at Jason?
- Ch. 7 Why do you think Dagmar is throwing away her awards?
Who do you think switched the cassettes?
- Ch. 8 Do you think Jason and Tank will ever get to be friends?
- Ch. 9 What do you think Kelly is going to do next?
- Ch. 10 Do you think Tank will change his mind about being Jason's "agent" when he finds out about the "Turbo-Tank" scene in Jason's script?

- Ch. 11 How do you think Jason will end his movie?
- Ch. 12 Do you think Jason has any hope of selling his script to a Hollywood movie producer?
- Ch. 13 Why do you think Dagmar offers to play a game with Jason?
- Ch. 14 Who do you think the "scary-looking kid" in the black jeans and black jacket is?
- Ch. 15 What do you think Jason and Tank are going to do next?
- Ch. 16 Do you think Tank will be able to teach Jason how to swim in time?
Do you think Jason will be able to teach Tank how to dance in time?
- Ch. 17 Do you think Jason will pass his swimming test?
- Ch. 18 How do you think things are going for Tank at the dance?
- Ch. 19 Do you think things will be different between Jason and Dagmar now? How?
- Ch. 20 What do you think Jason's next movie will be about?

Comprehension Guide:

Knowledge:

1. Who are the two main characters? What is their relationship to one another?
2. What is Jason's goal? What is Tank's goal?

Comprehension:

1. Explain why Jason wants to trade places with Tank.
2. List 5 key scenes in the book and put them in the order they appeared in the story.
3. Why does Dagmar want Jason to take more swimming lessons, even after he passes tadpole swimming?

Application:

1. Should Tank face any consequences for trading places with Jason? Why or why not? And if you answered yes, what do you think should happen to him?
2. Demonstrate how Jason and Tank both changed over the course of the story.

Analysis:

1. Compare Jason to Tank. How are they alike? How are they different.
2. Do you think Tank is a bully? Why or why not?
3. What if Tank's brother hadn't overheard Jason and Tank in the bathroom that day? Do you think the story would have turned out differently?

Synthesis:

1. What if you were in Jason's shoes. You can't swim, but your parents keep signing you up for more lessons. How would you handle it?
2. How would you respond if you found out your little brother or sister wanted to make a horror movie starring you?

Evaluate:

1. Which scene in the book was your favorite and why?
2. Do you think Jason and Tank were wrong to trade places? Why or why not?
3. Will Jason and Tank remain friends?

Multiple Intelligence Projects:

Verbal/Linguistic:

Write a scene from Jason's movie script as you imagine he might have written it.

Or

Choose someone you'd like to trade places with for a short time. Imagine what would happen if you did trade places. Write a paragraph or two about what you think might happen.

Or

Tell about a time when you were the only one who couldn't do something. How did you feel? Did you ever learn to do it?

Logical/Mathematical:

Make a brief timeline of the major events in the story. Be sure to place each scene in its proper location. List at least 10 major events. Circle the event that you believe is the major turning point in the story.

Visual/Spatial:

Design a poster to advertise Jason's movie, The Dagmablob. Be sure to make it colorful and exciting so people will want to see the movie.

Or

Design a poster for Trading Places with Tank Talbott with the purpose of convincing others to read the book. Include the title, author's name, publisher, copyright and a few words to describe the book.

Body/Kinesthetic:

Tank has to take ballroom dance classes so he can dance at his sister's wedding. Find out what the names of some of these dances are. Then see if you can learn the steps to one or more of them.

Or

Act out one of the scenes between Jason and Tank. Don't write a script. Just do it as you remember it. Improvise if you'd like.

Musical/Rhythmic:

Listen to some ballroom dance music. Do you like it? Why or why not? How is it similar to music you usually listen to? How is it different?

Interpersonal:

Write a letter from Jason to his friend Luke where Jason explains how he and Tank got to be friends.

Or

Break into small groups. Ask each person to tell which character in the story he/she identifies with most and why.

Intrapersonal:

At the end of the book, Jason thinks about first impressions and how sometimes they're wrong. His opinion of Tank has changed quite a bit since he's gotten to know him. Think of some people who know you, but don't know you very well. List several ideas they might have about you that would be wrong.

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