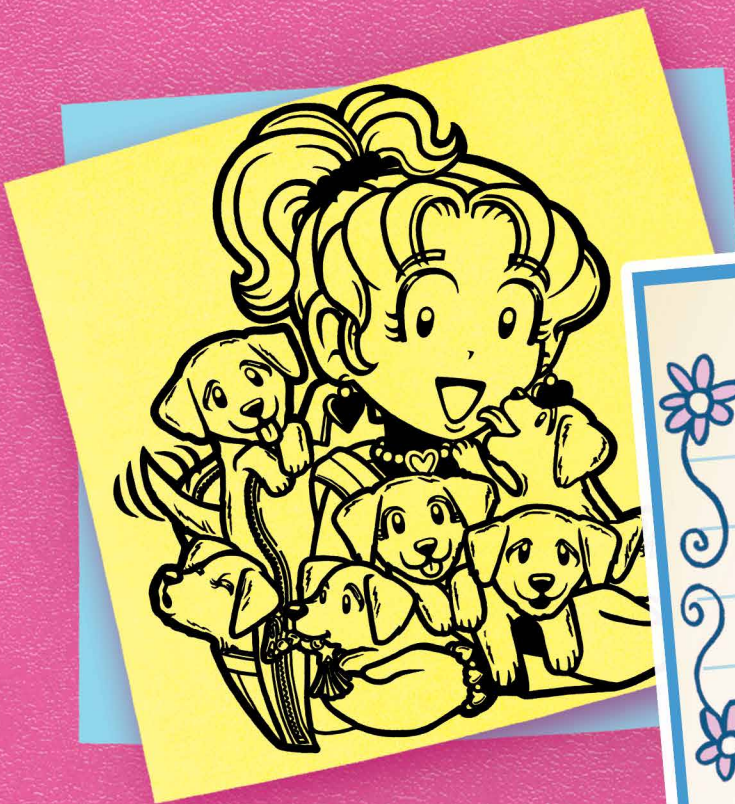


DORK diaries

Written and illustrated by Rachel Renée Russell



A Discussion Guide

Featuring:

- Tales from a Not-So-Fabulous Life*
- Tales from a Not-So-Popular Party Girl*
- Tales from a Not-So-Talented Pop Star*
- How to Dork Your Diary*
- Tales from a Not-So-Graceful Ice Princess*
- Tales from a Not-So-Smart Miss Know-It-All*
- Tales from a Not-So-Happy Heartbreaker*
- Tales from a Not-So-Glam TV Star*
- Tales from a Not-So-Happily Ever After*
- Tales from a Not-So-Dorky Drama Queen*
- Tales from a Not-So-Perfect Pet Sitter*
- Tales from a Not-So-Friendly Frenemy*
- Tales from a Not-So-Secret Crush Catastrophe*

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 1:

Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Fabulous Life**



Dork Diaries 1: Tales from a Not-So-Fabulous Life

Discussion Questions

1. Nikki is starting at a new private school. How does she learn about the culture of the school and figure out who is trustworthy? Have you ever had to start over at a new school? If yes, how did it feel? If no, how do you think you would act the first few days?
2. When Nikki's mom tells her she's getting a back-to-school present that will help her "communicate her thoughts and feelings," she is so excited because she thinks it will be a new cell phone. Instead, Nikki's mom gives her a diary. Nikki is incredibly disappointed, not just because she didn't get a cell phone, but also because she thinks a paper diary is outdated. Despite her initial resistance, Nikki ends up writing a lot in her diary. Do you think paper diaries are outdated? Would you rather share your thoughts and commentary about school life privately in a diary, or more publicly using an online forum such as a blog or social networking site like Facebook?
3. Nikki feels that her bedroom should be her own private space. At school, she, Chloe, and Zoey use the janitor's closet for their meetings. Do you have your own bedroom or another special space that feels like it is all your own? If so, who makes up the rules for this special place? If you could have complete dominion over your space, what would be your top three rules?
4. At first, Nikki thinks Chloe and Zoey are kind of annoying, but she gets past her first impression of the pair when they all bond over their shared dislike of MacKenzie. As the story progresses and they become closer friends, we see more of their shared interests and also their differences. What do you think makes a good friend? How do the girls demonstrate these characteristics?



5. Sometimes family or close friends develop their own special ways of communicating through shared gestures and vocabulary, secret handshakes, and other signals. For Nikki, Chloe, and Zoey, the language of friendship already includes jazz hands, the stinkeye, and a lot of acronyms like CCPs (Cute, Cool, and Popular), 4Fs (Friends, Fun, Fashion, and Flirting), and GGG-ing (Giggling, Gossiping, and Glossing). Some of them come from magazines or popular culture, and some seem to be the girls' own inventions. What are some of your favorite words, phrases, gestures, and inside jokes you share with your family or friends?

6. Do you think the "thank you for the oatmeal" note Nikki's mom leaves is sincere, or is she trying to let Nikki know that she is on to her deception, but forgives her? Either way, Nikki is very relieved that she's not in trouble. Have you had a close call where you thought you were busted, but ended up being just fine? What happened?

7. Several times when Nikki is writing about a conversation from earlier in the day, she includes her own very honest and blunt reply, then explains, "But I just say it inside my head, so no one really hears it except me." When is it good to self-censor? When would it be better to speak up? How can we learn to tell the difference?

Activities

1. Write a journal entry, complete with both words and illustrations (stick figures are just fine), about something that happened to you in the past week. It could be something pretty mundane or a big event.

2. One of Nikki's traditions with her sister, Brianna, is to try to save money on family celebrations (like Father's Day and their parents' anniversary) with techniques, including bargain shopping, cooking at home, and craftmaking. Think up something you could do or make for your parents (or a friend) that wouldn't cost a lot of money. Be sure to list where you'd get your supplies, approximate cost and time, and any personal significance it would have for the lucky recipient.

3. Nikki draws a storyboard for Chloe's "chick flick" version of what could happen if she keeps the napkin Brandon gave her. Storyboards are a method of organizing and communicating a sequence of events; they often serve as an early visual outline of a storytelling project, like a motion picture or computer animation. Create a storyboard depicting something that you'd like to have happen in your life. Or, create a storyboard of something that you dread happening.

4. If Nikki were to design a tattoo for you, what would it look like? Sketch your tattoo or describe it with words, and explain why you chose these specific images and colors for your tattoo. What do you think it would tell people about you?

5. Nikki's blank diary gives her a lot of space to use words and pictures to depict the day's events. Take your favorite entry from the book, and compose a brief text message summary (160 characters or less) that Nikki might have posted if she had also gotten a snazzy new cell phone at the beginning of the school year.



DORK diaries

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 2:



Dork Diaries 2: Tales from a Not-So-Popular Party Girl

Discussion Questions

1. Nikki's arch nemesis MacKenzie continues torturing her in this second Dork Diaries volume by calling her names, making fun of her clothes, and dissing her friends and artistic talent. Do you have an arch nemesis? What makes this person your ultimate rival? What would you do if you had lockers next to each other?
2. Nikki finds out that she won \$500 in the Avant-garde Art Contest. She had originally planned to use the money to buy a cell phone, but decided instead to save the money for art camp next summer. If you won \$500, what would you do with it?
3. Nikki admits that her major crush on Brandon has caused RCS (Roller Coaster Syndrome). What does this mean? Have you ever had this feeling when you are around someone you have a crush on? Does it impact your ability to talk to him or her?
4. Throughout the book, Nikki continually talks about how she is so unpopular, ranking herself lower on the WCD CCP Popularity Index Chart than the school janitor, school mascot, and head lunch lady. In fact, she calls her own diary the "Dork Diary," and often refers to herself as a dork throughout the book. However, Nikki has several best friends and a popular boy has a crush on her. How do you define popularity? Who determines who is popular at your school? Do you think how you view yourself impacts how others view you?
5. Nikki's mom always wanted to be a ballerina, so she signed up both her daughters for lessons, even though neither of them wanted to attend ballet classes. Have your parents ever forced you to do something you didn't want to do? How did you respond?
6. During MacKenzie's party, Jessica "accidentally" bumps Nikki's plate of fruit and chocolate, causing the entire plate of food to spill all over Nikki's new party dress in front of everyone. Out of embarrassment, Nikki leaves the party and doesn't even take the opportunity to talk to her crush Brandon, as she is waiting around outside for her dad to pick her up. Have you ever been embarrassed by someone else in front of your peers? How did you handle it? If you could go back and respond differently, would you? What would you do differently?
7. In response to her little sister's fairy phobia and constant pleas for a bathroom monitor in the middle of the night, Nikki comes up with a plan to banish the imaginary tooth fairy in Brianna's room for good using a homemade repellent made with water, vinegar, tuna fish oil, sardine oil, and garlic. What's the most unusual thing you have ever done to get your brother or sister to stop bothering you?
8. In Nikki's own words, she was trying to "do it ALL" on Halloween, including paint faces at the ballet class Halloween party, attend the Halloween dance with Chloe and Zoey dressed as a bag of trash, and attend the Halloween dance as

Brandon's date, dressed as Shakespeare's Juliet. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you took on too much at one time? Were you successful? How would you do it differently if you had to do it over again?

Activities

1. In preparation for MacKenzie's party, Nikki goes shopping for a new party dress. Using illustrations, Nikki shows the different personas she could adopt for the party: "Wako Emo," "Drama Queen Mean," "Baggy Shabby Chic," "Raging Rebel Rocker," "Goth Girl Groovy," "Very Scary Vampy," "Silly Celebutant," and "Cos Girl Cutie." But then she decides that none of those styles reflects her true personality. Do any of these styles reflect your personality? If yes, which one and why? If not, how would you describe your personal style? Design your own party-glam outfit, with both an illustration and a description. Also, be sure and give your style a title, like Nikki did for each of her looks.
2. After MacKenzie resigns as chairperson of the Halloween dance, Nikki and her friends take on the task of making sure the dance happens, in spite of MacKenzie's desertion. The problem is that they don't have a lot of time, all of MacKenzie's friends on the planning committee also resigned, and MacKenzie cancelled the venue, entertainment, decorations, and caterer. If you were in the same position as Nikki, how would you go about planning the dance? Come up with a budget for your party; pick a location, then design a plan for food, drinks, decorations, and entertainment. Create a marketing and publicity plan for how you would let everyone know the dance was still happening; include designing a mock flyer for the event.
3. The costume you choose for Halloween says a lot about your personality. Nikki goes as Juliet in a beautiful Shakespearean ball gown; Brandon chooses one of the Three Musketeers; Violet dresses like a clown; MacKenzie like a chic vampire; and Chloe and Zoey as bags of trash. What do each of these costumes say about each character? Design your ultimate Halloween costume. Explain, in writing, what you believe this costume says about you.



4. Throughout this book, we get to read all about how Nikki feels about her little sister, her friends, the CCP (Cool, Cute, and Popular) group, MacKenzie, and even Brandon. But what we don't learn is how these people feel about Nikki and her wild schemes. Choose two of the following characters/situations and create a sample diary page for the character, as if it were taken directly from his or her personal diary:

Jessica—dress getting ruined in the chocolate fondue mishap at MacKenzie's birthday party

Brianna—watching Nikki use the tooth fairy repellent

Valerie—deejaying the Halloween dance

Mackenzie—attending the successful Halloween dance that she did NOT plan

Chloe & Zoey—finding out that Nikki didn't tell them about her date with Brandon for the dance

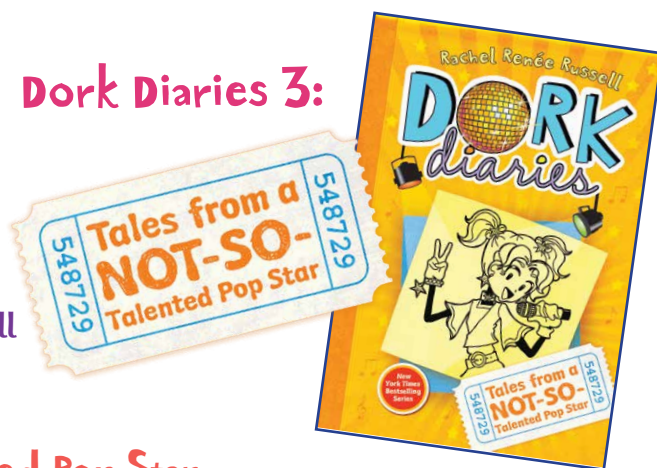
Brandon—wondering about Nikki's constant disappearance during the Halloween dance

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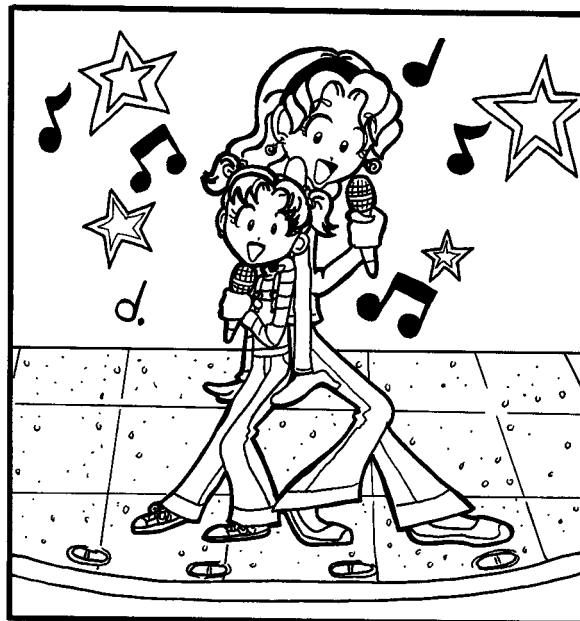
Dork Diaries 3:



Dork Diaries 3: Tales from a Not-So-Talented Pop Star

Discussion Questions

1. Nikki discusses some of her fears in *Dork Diaries 3*. What was your biggest fear when you were little? What about now?
2. Why do you think Nikki's parents decide to deliberately create Family Sharing Time? Does your family do anything like this? Nikki suggests her family do an extreme sport, like bungee jumping, together. What are some activities that you think would be good for Family Sharing Time? Why?
3. Nikki worries a lot about being seen doing things like dancing at Queasy Cheesy or getting dropped off in the roach van. Why can a situation be okay when nobody sees, but humiliating if observed? Why do we care?
4. Nikki doesn't approach her mom about the video problem, her dad about the bug problem, or her friends about either problem. In the previous books, Nikki has also kept her problems to herself—even though her friends constantly prove loyal and helpful. Why doesn't Nikki share her problems with others? Find three examples in the book that support your answer(s).
5. Language can be very powerful. Nikki and her friends decide to embrace the label "dork" when naming their band "Dorkalicious." What happens when someone claims what might be considered a negative label, like "dork," with pride?
6. Nikki writes that she is not jealous, because "How juvenile would THAT be?!" Her denial seems a bit too passionate to be believed, though. Do you ever get jealous even though you know you shouldn't? How do you deal?
7. Nikki's eccentric grandmother comes to visit for Thanksgiving. We learn that she belongs to an elderly Segway gang and takes road trips. If you have grandparents or older friends/family in your life, what do their lives look like? How are they similar to and different from Nikki's grandma? What characteristic of theirs would you most like to possess when you get older?

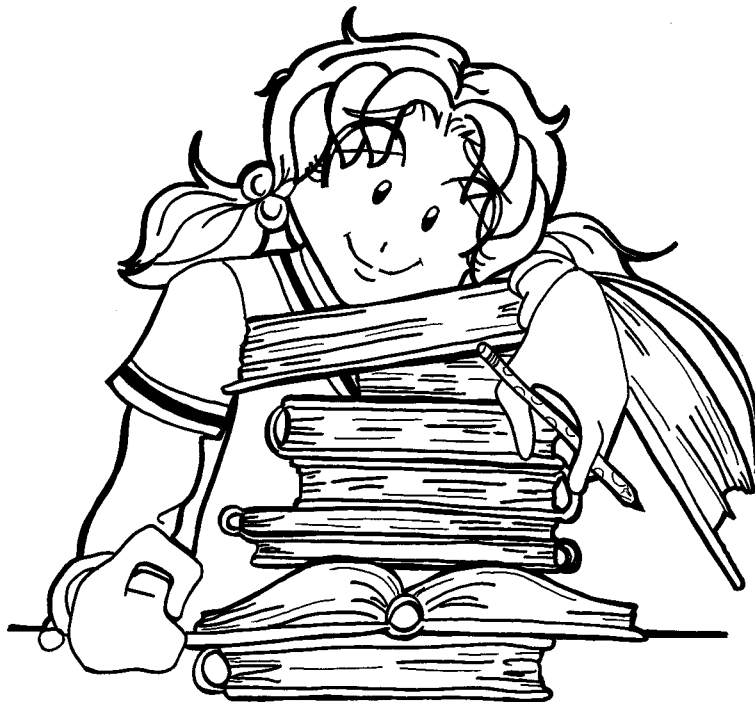


Activities

1. Imagine you are creating a band. Team up with a couple of classmates to name your band, decide what kind of music you would perform and how you would dress, and design a promotional T-shirt or poster. Be sure to explain your choices.
2. Now that you have formed your band, brainstorm a name for your first album and at least five song titles. Pick one of the song titles and work together to write a first draft of the lyrics. If you're musically inclined, feel free to create a melody as well. Keep in mind Nikki's observation that expressing how you feel is the most important thing.
3. Nikki feels sudden stage fright and begins thinking very negative thoughts before having to perform onstage. How can the words we say to ourselves have an effect on how we feel? Find or create a positive mantra, something that you could repeat to yourself to feel happier, stronger, or more confident. Practice saying this mantra in the mirror every day for the next week and see if it changes how you feel.
4. For each of the following words used in this book, write what you think it means. Once you finish going through the list on your own, look up each word in the dictionary and correct your original definitions if needed.

- Anguish
- Avant-garde
- Debilitating
- Devious
- Diabolical
- Drivel
- Eccentric
- Faux
- Hideous
- Hypothesis
- Indignities
- Latent
- Motley
- Perplexed
- Profusely
- Prudent
- Putrid
- Pyromaniac
- Quaint
- Sashayed
- Senile
- Sinister
- Stimulating
- Vile

5. In each book, author Rachel Renée Russell includes a dedication and an acknowledgment section. Imagine that 5, 10, or 15 years from now you publish a book, produce an album, or accept an award. To whom would you dedicate your hard work? Which people in your life would you most likely thank? Write out your dedication and acknowledgments or a draft of your acceptance speech.

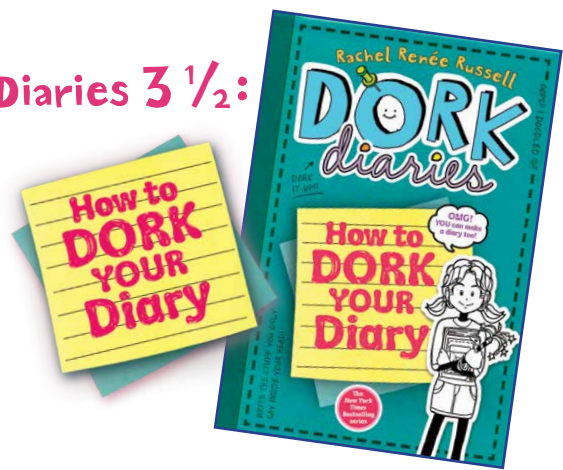


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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 3 1/2:



Dork Diaries 3 1/2: How to Dork Your Diary

Discussion Questions

1. Take the “Discover Your Diary Identity” quiz in the book. Do you think the result accurately describes your personality? How would YOU describe your personality and habits? Is Nikki’s suggested diary-keeping format (based on your quiz results) the one you would be most likely to use for keeping a diary? Why or why not? Can you think of any other ways someone could keep track of their daily thoughts, emotions, and activities?
2. Why do you think Nikki writes, “Make sure you write in your diary every single day” even if you lose the original diary and have to write in a spare notebook? Why is keeping a diary important?
3. Several times in this book, Nikki initially discounts her friends’ assistance and then is pleasantly surprised by the help and support they offer. For example, Nikki finally shares her problem with Chloe and Zoey and feels so relieved to have their help. When Nikki finally pays attention to the gift Brandon is trying to give her, it turns out to be really sweet and helpful. Have you ever discounted a friend’s assistance at first and later accepted it? What happened? How did you feel?
4. Chloe goes Dumpster diving in search of Nikki’s diary. You’ve probably heard the saying that one man’s trash is another man’s treasure. If you cleaned out your old “junk,” unwanted gifts, and outgrown clothes to sell or donate, what kinds of things would you get rid of? What would you be delighted to spot at a garage sale or discarded at the side of the road?
5. Tongue-tied at being discovered in the boys’ locker room, Zoey blurts out a quote from former President Franklin D. Roosevelt: “Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds.” In his first inaugural address, FDR also said, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” What do you think these two quotes mean?
6. This whole book is about Nikki’s missing diary. What would you do if your diary went missing? Where would you look? Who would you blame? Even if you don’t keep a diary, imagine you discovered that everyone at school suddenly knew one of your biggest secrets. How do you think that could happen? How would you respond?

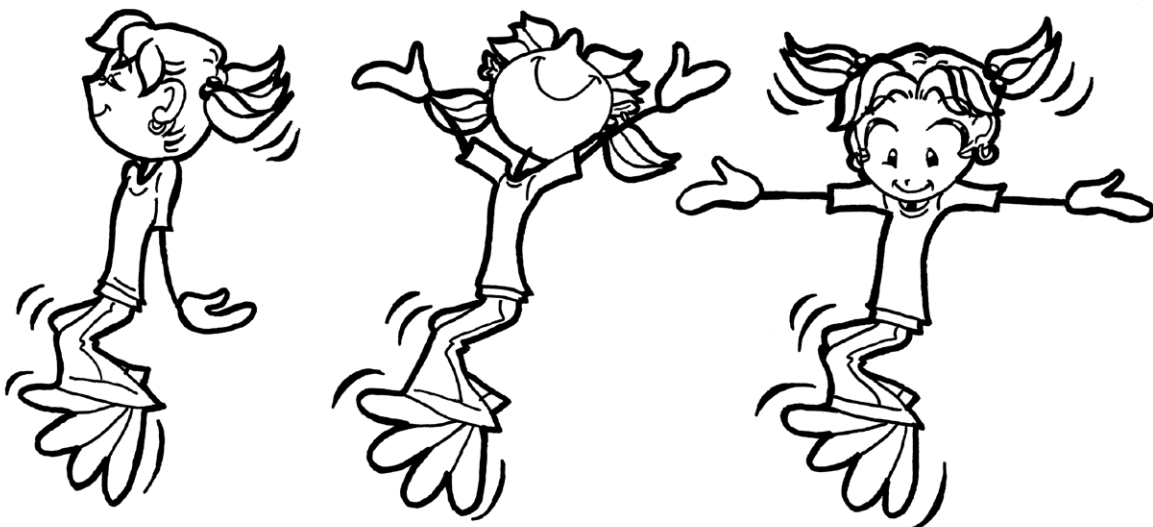


Activities

1. An author must paint a picture with words, carefully selecting adjectives, nouns, and even verbs in order to evoke a clearer image and to help readers better understand the characters. In the book, Nikki complains yet again about how she hates when MacKenzie *sashays*. What are some other descriptive words for how people walk? What can you tell about a person from how he or she moves? Complete the following chart with at least eight motion verbs and their implications for a person's mood, personality, or physique:

MOTION VERB	IMPLIED CHARACTER TRAITS

2. Pick an action and create a flip animation like Nikki's Snoopy "happy dance" at the bottom right corners of the blank pages in this book. Describe why you chose to animate that particular action.



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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 4:

Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Graceful
Ice Princess**



Dork Diaries 4: Tales from a Not-So-Graceful Ice Princess

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt completely overwhelmed by the task ahead of you? What would it take for you to step up to a challenge that previously seemed impossible? What techniques can make a large task more manageable?
2. Nikki decides she must beg MacKenzie to skate in her place, so they'll be able to earn money for Fuzzy Friends. Have you ever had to put your group's success above your personal desires or your ego? Why? What did that feel like? If you haven't ever done so, in what circumstances do you think you would? Would it be easy or hard for you?
3. Nikki loves *Lady and the Tramp* and easily imagines herself in the classic romantic spaghetti dinner scene. What's your favorite movie from childhood? How could you imagine yourself in a scene? Describe the setting and any friends you would cast beside you. Would you tweak anything from the original script, or would it play out pretty much the same in your life?
4. Even though MacKenzie cheats and pulls all kinds of mean tricks on Nikki, Nikki explains that because she wants to "be nice and show good sportsmanship," she chooses not to taunt MacKenzie about the competition results. How do you define good sportsmanship? Provide three examples each of good and bad sportsmanship.
5. MacKenzie's behavior to Nikki and her friends throughout the Dork Diaries series could be considered not just bad sportsmanship but actual bullying. Have you ever been bullied or acted like a bully? Why do you think people bully others? What is the best way to respond to a bully?
6. Nikki feels like she can't ask Brandon what his hug means because doing so would betray her interest, so she feigns nonchalance and overanalyzes inside. Have you ever wanted to know something but been embarrassed or afraid even to admit you wanted to know? What, if anything, did you do to try to find out the answer to your question?
7. Nikki keeps Brandon's secret, and she doesn't even tell him that she knows. If you discovered a big secret about one of your friends, what would you do?
8. Nikki and her friends help in the library and read a lot. Throughout the Dork Diaries series, they refer to various trends in literature, film, and popular culture, like vampires, werewolves, and zombies. What is your favorite current trend? Least favorite? Why?

Activities

1. Nikki mentally goes through most of the six major questions of journalism in her response to learning about Brandon’s living situation. Take a moment to interview one of your classmates about an event from his or her childhood. Be sure to find out Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. Record the questions and answers, and then take thirty minutes to write a newspaper article (minimum of two paragraphs), reporting the story in your own words. You are welcome to quote your interview subject directly, but you need to draw in readers with an original narrative. Connect the dots in a compelling story.

2. Zoey suggests a nonfiction book, *Figure Skating for Dummies*, and Chloe suggests a novel, *The Ice Princess*, to support Nikki’s efforts to learn ice skating. Which are you personally more likely to turn to when learning a new activity? Create a comparison chart indicating the kind of help one might gain from an instructional or biographical resource versus a fictional story.



Type of support

Type of support	Non-fiction	Fiction
(example) Role model	✓	✓

3. Have you ever tried to drop hints about a gift you would like for your birthday or a holiday? Are you more direct or creative? Compile a wish list of five things and come up with a strategic plan to lobby friends and/or family for your requests. Plan to be as subtle or direct as you like, but be sure to explain why you choose your approach.

4. Nikki draws a giant group hug to represent the love and closeness she is feeling for her family. How could you symbolically represent your mood right now? Draw and describe it.

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 5:



Dork Diaries 5: Tales from a Not-So-Smart Miss Know-It-All

Discussion Questions

1. Nikki, Chloe, and Zoey each describe the characteristics for their ideal boyfriends. What would be the most important ingredients for your dream date? Why?
2. During their New Year's Eve sleepover, the three girls play Truth or Dare. Which do you think takes more courage, sharing some information or doing some deed? Why? Why do you think this game remains popular over time?
3. The more Nikki considers all the ways MacKenzie has mistreated her, the more she thinks maybe Zoey is right that it's time for payback. How can your friends affect your decision-making? Is there a line that, once crossed, would tempt you to seek revenge? Can you relate to Nikki's description of ignoring the little voice of caution in your head? If so, how do you normally feel afterwards?
4. In the book, there is a list of positions on Nikki's school newspaper available for new students. What role would you want on a school newspaper? Why? What role would you be least comfortable serving in, and why?
5. Nikki asks her best friends for advice. Their classmates write Miss Know-It-All for advice. Who can you ask for advice? Do you ask different people in different situations, or do you have one go-to person for most any problem? Does anybody come to you for advice? Why or why not?
6. Throughout the Dork Diaries series, Nikki has given many different kinds of gifts to her friends and family, including budget-saving handmade items, last-minute convenience presents, cherished items that are hard to share, and gifts that might also benefit her—like a dinner gift certificate for two. How do you decide what presents to give your friends and family? What's the best gift you've ever given? The worst?

Activities

1. If you were to channel your inner professional and dress for success, as Nikki does, what would your outfit look like? Don't forget appropriate shoes, tools, and accessories. Select an occupation and draw your outfit, making sure to label each part. Then write one sentence for each component of your outfit, explaining why it is part of a successful look in your career field.
2. Nikki thinks she could almost use a form letter for her Miss Know-It-All advice column, because her replies are so similar in structure. She plays around with this idea. Think of another situation, like writing "thank you" notes, where the core message is repeated with only minor variations, and create your own form letter.
3. Think about your favorite book, TV show, or movie. From the point of view of a main character, write a letter to Miss Know-It-All, requesting advice with the major plot problem.
4. Write a helpful, positive response to the following letter:



5. Brianna tries to explain why her newspaper is called the *Some Times* by saying that it sometimes reports good news and sometimes it's bad news. If you were to create your own newspaper or 'zine, what would it be called? Why? Come up with three headlines and sketch or describe the accompanying illustrations for stories in your paper.

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 6:

Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Happy
Heartbreaker**



Dork Diaries 6: Tales from a Not-So-Happy Heartbreaker

Discussion Questions

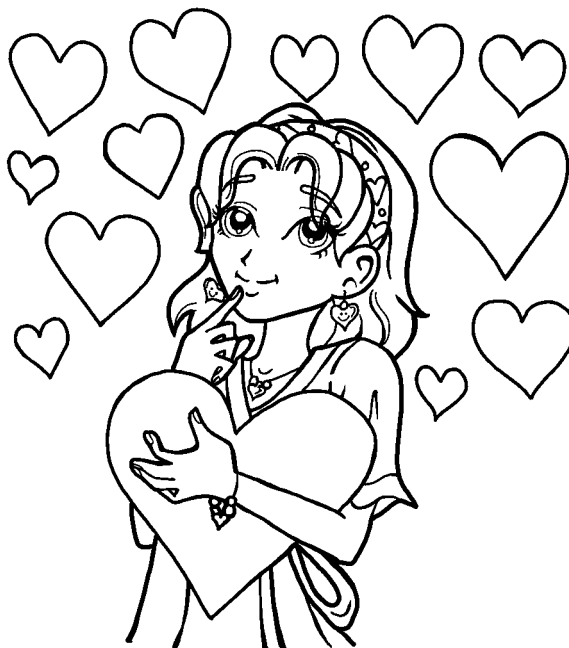
1. Even if you've never been stood up for a date, chances are pretty good that you've waited around for a phone call, meeting, or ride. Like Nikki, do you imagine best and worst case scenarios for why somebody doesn't call or show up? What's the most outlandish possibility you have come up with? What was really the cause for the other person's delay or cancellation?
2. Nikki is horrified by the haircut Brianna gives her and repulsed by the bridesmaid dress she had to wear to her aunt's wedding. What's the worst haircut or makeover you've ever had, or the worst outfit you've been forced to wear? How did you make it work?
3. At school, Nikki releases her frustration by screaming in the bathroom stall. How do you let off steam when everything seems to go wrong?
4. Throughout the book, Nikki is often upset with Brandon, but she never gives him an opportunity to explain what happened or to apologize. Have you ever pushed away a friend or family member before they could talk with you about why you were upset? Why? What happened? Did you give them a chance to explain or to apologize if they hurt you?
5. Nikki spends so long waiting for the perfect moment to invite Brandon to the dance that she nearly runs out of time. Have you ever taken so much time working up the courage to do something that you missed the opportunity entirely? If so, how did that feel? When you miss one chance at something, what can you do to create an alternative opportunity for yourself?
6. Nikki has a wild dream about the upcoming Sweetheart Dance. What's the strangest dream or nightmare you've had that was obviously inspired by real life?
7. Fear can paralyze you, or it can be a powerful motivator. What are some examples in this book where fear works against Nikki? What are some examples where fear helps her accomplish more than she would otherwise? In your life, does a little fear tend to help or hurt you? Why?

Activities

1. Nikki often uses figurative language to express herself. Find three examples of similes or metaphors in the book, and then create at least three of your own. Remember that figurative language should paint a vivid picture to help readers better relate to an unfamiliar feeling or experience.
2. Nikki imagines the perfect wedding for Brianna and Oliver. Design a dream wedding for yourself, a friend or family member, or a celebrity. Don't forget outfits, decorations, music, and food for the reception.
3. Design a campaign poster for Sweetheart Princess or Prince. The poster can be for yourself or for a good friend; just be sure to combine eye-catching images with a slogan and at least three qualities that would make this person the best choice. Depending on classroom resources, you can use physical materials or design a poster on the computer. The design and wording are both important, so plan your campaign poster carefully.
4. Nikki listens to Taylor Swift songs for romantic inspiration while creating a Valentine's Day card for Brandon. Create a soundtrack for at least five important scenes in this book and explain why you chose each song.

Scene and Page #s	Song Title and Artist	Reason for Selection

5. Nikki writes of the supposed shark in the pool: "It could have been living in the Westchester County sewers like those alligators, pythons, and other scary creatures we hear about in the news." She is referring to an urban legend. Using a mixture of credible online or print resources, research another popular urban legend. Write about it in at least three paragraphs; in addition to retelling the most popular version of the story (in your own words), include information on its origins. Be sure to cite your sources.

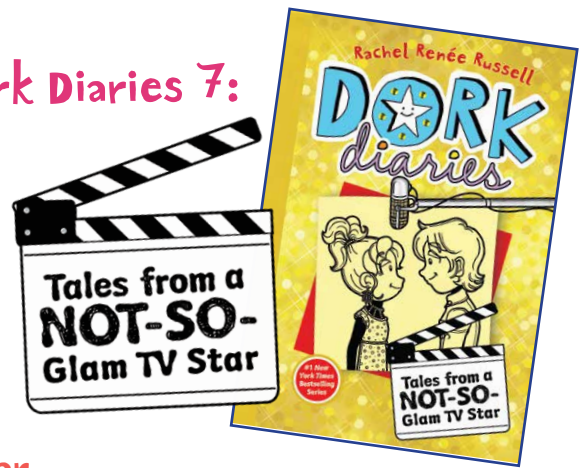


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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 7:



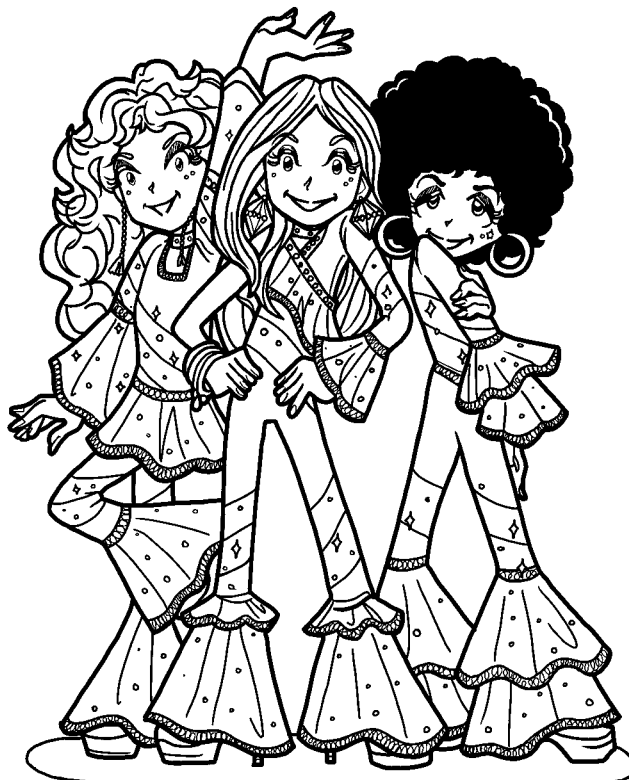
Dork Diaries 7: Tales from a Not-So-Glam TV Star

Discussion Questions

1. When Nikki, Chloe, and Zoey are mistaken for the Dance Divas, Nikki initially tries to correct Blaine Blackwell's error but is quickly caught up in the glamour of receiving a fabulous makeover from the celebrity stylist.
 - Have you ever been the subject of mistaken identity or made a faulty assumption about someone you just met? What happened?
 - Who would be your celebrity doppelganger (look-alike)? If someone mistook you for that celebrity, do you think you would correct the mix-up right away, or would you see how long you could make it before being exposed as an imposter? Why?
2. Nikki really struggles with her first PE quiz in martial arts. Have you ever been caught off guard by a pop quiz? How did you do? What is the most creative response you've ever given to a question you didn't know how to answer?
3. Nikki writes that she deserves Brandon's anger and would totally understand if he unfriended her on Facebook. What are some of the other signs that a person is probably losing his/her commitment to a friendship? What does it take to maintain a healthy relationship with your friends?
4. Sometimes the most cutting-edge trends begin out of necessity, but then become highly coveted. For example, a person who cannot afford to buy a new pair of jeans might continue wearing a ragged pair every day, but then a celebrity chooses to copy the look and suddenly everyone wants to buy "distressed" jeans. Similarly, Nikki's parents rehabilitate old sanitation worker outfits into ski suits, and then Nikki's celebrity status as a reality TV star and winner of the extreme ski competition catapults the custom look into fashionable couture. What do you think drives popular trends? How can you predict what will be "in" next season? Which do you think is more important: form (how something looks) or function (how something works)?
5. Throughout her diaries, Nikki describes springing back from seemingly disastrous situations through a combination of luck (winning the extreme ski contest), pluck (facing the potential mob), and thinking on her feet (creating the kissing booth). What has helped you to be resilient in the face of challenges?
6. Think about any reality TV shows you have watched, as well as Nikki's experiences in this book. Would you want to star in your own reality television show? Why or why not? Why do you think people enjoy watching reality television or reading celebrity gossip magazines and blogs?

Activities

1. One of the major themes in this book concerns how outer appearances do not always match up with inner realities. Give at least five examples of how characters in this book present one appearance outwardly while feeling something else inside. For each example, answer the following questions: Why do they hide their true feelings? How successful are they at fooling others? Are there any weaknesses in the facade that might give them away? What evidence, if any, does the book give that the characters' inner feelings change as a result of the changes in either their outward appearances or how they are perceived?
2. For his scholarship application Brandon has to write a photo essay about one of his classmates. Pretend you are applying for the same scholarship and select an interesting classmate to profile. If you have photos of this person and his/her permission to use them, go ahead and include them in your essay. If not, create an original illustration of your classmate, instead.
3. Throughout her diaries, Nikki struggles to hide her scholarship status—and her family's finances in general—from her classmates at their expensive private school. Even MacKenzie shows signs of the pressure to appear prosperous when she wears a replica of Taylor Swift's dress to the school dance. Research the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses." What does it mean? Where did it originate? In a few paragraphs, propose an explanation for why we tend to worry about how we compare to our peers. Use your best persuasive writing techniques.
4. Nikki writes, "I'm so TOUGH, I make my TEARS cry." Come up with three of your own hyperbolic examples of character traits. Remember, don't be mean like MacKenzie.
5. Nikki writes about the SGTCWGC, or **Standard Guidelines for Texting in Class Without Getting Caught**, and the possibility of CPCBT, or **Cell Phone Confiscation By Teacher**. Both SGTCWGC and CPCBT are abbreviations made from initial letters, and each helps to shorten a long phrase. When this kind of abbreviation can also be pronounced like a word, it is called an acronym. Think about the abbreviations and acronyms you know—in addition to saving time or space, some of them probably serve as mnemonics to help you remember otherwise unwieldy information. Research some other mnemonic devices, list them here, and try out one or two at home. Report back on your success at memorizing something new.





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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 8:

Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Happily
Ever After**



Dork Diaries 8: Tales from a Not-So-Happily Ever After

Discussion Questions

1. At first Nikki thinks everybody is staring because they love her new sweater, but then she is mortified to realize they've actually been laughing at the sandwich stuck to her clothes. If you were in Nikki's shoes, how would you react? What would you do if you saw somebody in a similar situation?
2. Zoey loves reading self-help books and is always ready with an inspirational quote to help her friends deal with their problems. What is your favorite quote from a book, song, speech, movie, or other source? Why? Where did you first hear or read it?
3. As Nikki learns, variations on basic fairy tales are often told across many different cultures, and the characters are often built on archetypes. Given the universal nature of these stories, most of us can relate to one or more characters. Which fairy tale protagonist or villain do you most relate to? Why?
4. According to Nikki's English teacher, "Every fairy tale has a main character, or protagonist, who is usually a good person." Sometimes, however, the protagonist may not seem like such a good person. When the main character lacks traditional heroic qualities or behaves in an unheroic manner, he or she is called an antihero. What are some examples of antiheroes you've seen in books, television, movies, or comics?
5. It often seems like the grass is greener on the other side, but Nikki helps her new fairy tale friends realize that nobody has the perfect life. How can our limited perspectives make it easy to be jealous of others, or hard to empathize with them? What can we do to better understand the people around us?
6. The Renegades and Regals that Nikki befriends get excited at the idea of breaking stereotypes, conventions, and even the formal rules of the Fairy Tale Land Council to pursue their own personal happiness. What purpose do social rules and formal laws serve? How can you determine which to follow strictly and which to treat more like guidelines? When is it okay to bend or break the rules?
7. Brianna the Fairy Godmother sometimes swoops in to help Nikki out of difficult situations. Other times Nikki must help herself. Have you ever wished someone would show up to magically solve your problems? How can you learn to accept help without coming to rely on it?
8. Abraham Lincoln famously stated that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." In an attempt to gather power and eventually become queen of Fairy Tale Land, MacKenzie sows discord between the Rebels and Renegades, encouraging them to hate each other. What kinds of division weaken a group of people? Why? How can we work together while still celebrating our differences?

Activities

1. Pretend you are in Nikki's English class and must complete creative writing and brainstorming activities to write your own twisted fairy tale. Give your protagonist and antagonist a name, describe and illustrate them both, and provide a one paragraph backstory for each character. Come up with a basic plot outline for your story. How will the conflict build between your main characters? Brainstorm at least three ideas for ways that magic or wish fulfillment could influence the final outcome of your story.
2. Compare and contrast two of the characters Nikki meets in Fairy Tale Land with the versions you know best from childhood.

CHARACTER NAME: _____	Version from your childhood (Source: _____)	Reinterpretation in Nikki's Fairy Tale Land
Personality		
Physical Appearance		
Speech		
Actions		

For each character, which version do you find more interesting? Why?

3. Create your own rhyming magical spell. Your spell should be at least eight lines long, and the spell's outcome should be something positive.
4. What is the most delicious food combination you've eaten that hasn't caught on in popular culture yet? Use storyboards to map out a persuasive commercial for your snack. Select or create music to accompany your commercial. Pitch your marketing plan to the class. Vote by secret ballot for the best commercial and the food that sounds the tastiest. If the two vote results are not the same, discuss why.

DORK diaries

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 9:



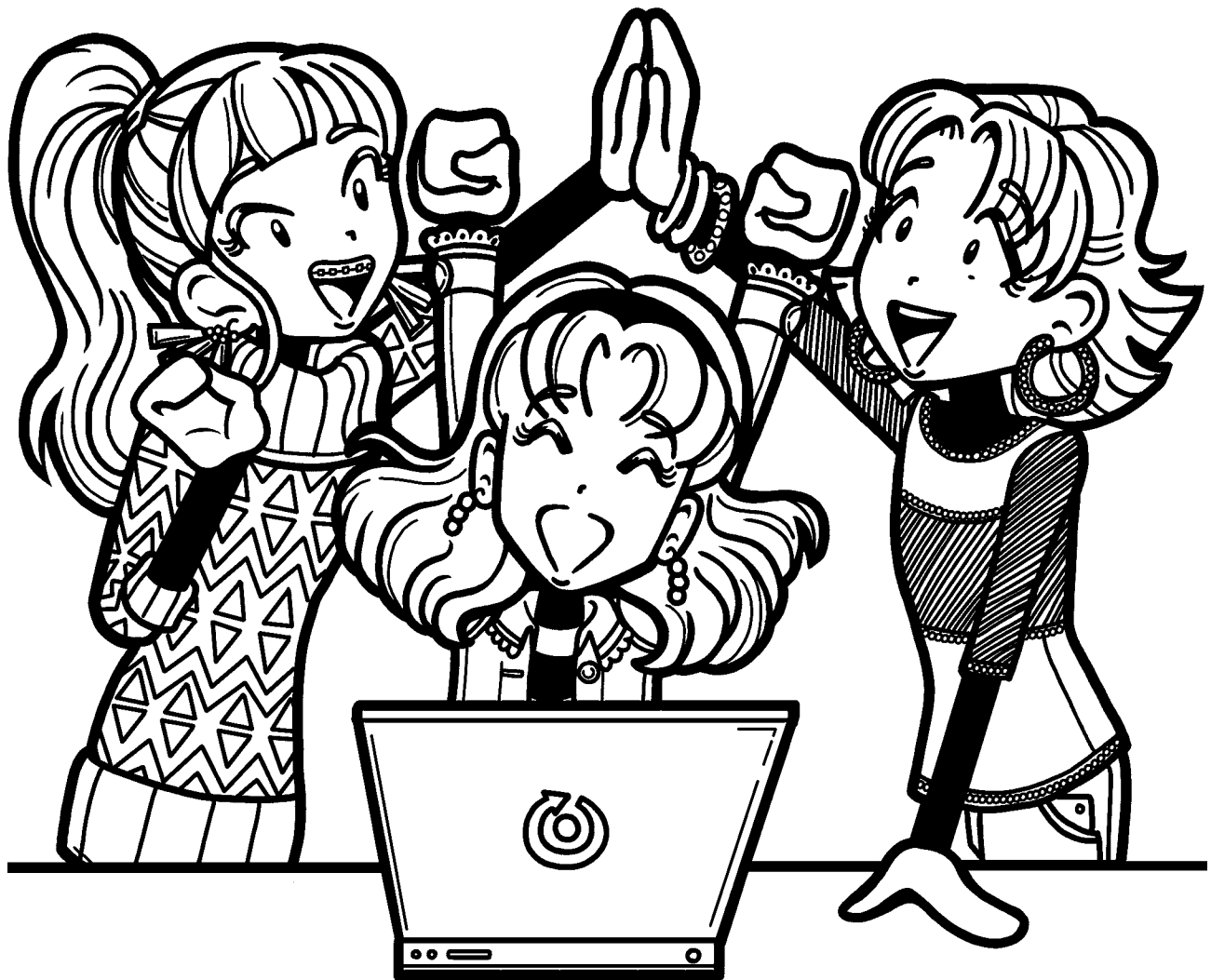
Dork Diaries 9: Tales from a Not-So-Dorky Drama Queen

Discussion Questions

1. Early in the book, Nikki and Brandon have a conversation that goes all wrong. What happens? Have you been in a situation like this? What are some ways to help prevent this kind of miscommunication? How can you recognize and fix when a conversation has gone awry?
2. From Nikki's point of view, it seems like MacKenzie always plays the role of mean girl and villain, but MacKenzie describes her intentions quite differently. She even goes so far as to portray Nikki's actions as evil. How can two people believe such different versions of the same story? Do you think Nikki and MacKenzie are both being truthful and sincere?
3. MacKenzie's parents don't think it's a big deal that an embarrassing video of their daughter is being shown around the school, but when that video is posted online, they take it seriously. If someone posted an embarrassing video of you online, would you ask a parent, teacher, or trusted adult for help or advice? When does friendly teasing cross the line into cyberbullying? Have you ever experienced, witnessed, or participated in behavior that might have crossed the line?
4. What do Nikki and MacKenzie learn from reading each other's diary entries? Does it make a difference in how they feel or behave to each other? Were you surprised by what you learned about MacKenzie in this book?
5. At first Chloe and Zoey encourage Nikki to show MacKenzie's diary confessions to the school principal. Once they realize they could get in trouble too, they look for another solution. How do you decide whether the positive consequences of an action (or inaction) outweigh its potential negative consequences? Are there times when you don't even care what the consequences are?
6. Do you think that Zoey is right when she says that "people who go out of their way to make others feel MISERABLE are SUPER insecure and miserable THEMSELVES!" Why or why not? Why else do you think people treat others poorly? What might a person gain by tearing someone down or building someone up? What is something you can do this week to improve someone else's day?
7. Think about how different characters in the Dork Diaries approach challenges. What things do they consider before deciding whether or how to act to solve their problems? What kinds of actions do they ultimately take? Are their approaches effective? Are they efficient? Are they responsible? How do you tend to handle problems?
8. Nikki writes: "Sometimes a diary can help you vent frustration, face your fears, find your courage, embrace your dreams, and learn to love yourself. And it's always better to rip into a page than another human being." What are other good outlets for negative emotions like anger, frustration, envy, and misery? What are some things in the Dork Diaries series that have made Nikki feel better when she is upset? What activities make you feel better, give you a dose of courage, or boost your self-esteem?

Activities

- 1.** MacKenzie gives Nikki's diary a makeover using an expensive shirt from the mall. The result is both high fashion and highly reflective of her personality. Imagine you found a blank diary with a boring cover. Using whatever materials are available (for example: paper, felt, fabric, magazine cutouts, paint, markers, computer graphics) create a new cover for your diary. Be creative and express who you are.
- 2.** Examine the handwriting, art style, tone, language, and other characteristics of MacKenzie's diary entries. Compare and contrast her writing with Nikki's. Is it easy to tell them apart? Why or why not? Write a new diary entry as if you were Nikki or MacKenzie. You can use events from your life or make up a fictional story, but try to imitate the girl's writing as closely as possible. Swap diary entries with a partner and see if you can each guess which girl the other picked.
- 3.** Telephone is a game played around the world where one person whispers a message to another through a line of people until the last person announces the message to the group. It is very common for errors to accumulate along the way. This is similar to how a rumor is spread around a school: a message may start out rooted in truth, but as it spreads, it begins to grow and evolve into something that is often very different from the original. You need at least six players for Telephone, but the more people you have, the more fun it is. Go ahead and give it a try. Line up in a row and have the first player in the line think up a phrase to share with the next person in line. That person will then pass it on to the next person, and so on until everyone in the line has heard the phrase. The player at the end will call out what she or he heard. How different was the final message from the original phrase? Can you figure out where the message changed? Discuss with each other how technologies and social media have changed the way rumors spread.



4. We learn a lot more about MacKenzie in this book than in the previous books. Complete the table, comparing and contrasting Nikki and MacKenzie to see what their lives have in common and how they differ.

	Nikki	MacKenzie
Parents		
Siblings		
Friends		
Socioeconomic Status		
Personality		
Reputation		
Talents		
Doubts and Worries		
Hopes and Dreams		

DORK diaries

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 10:

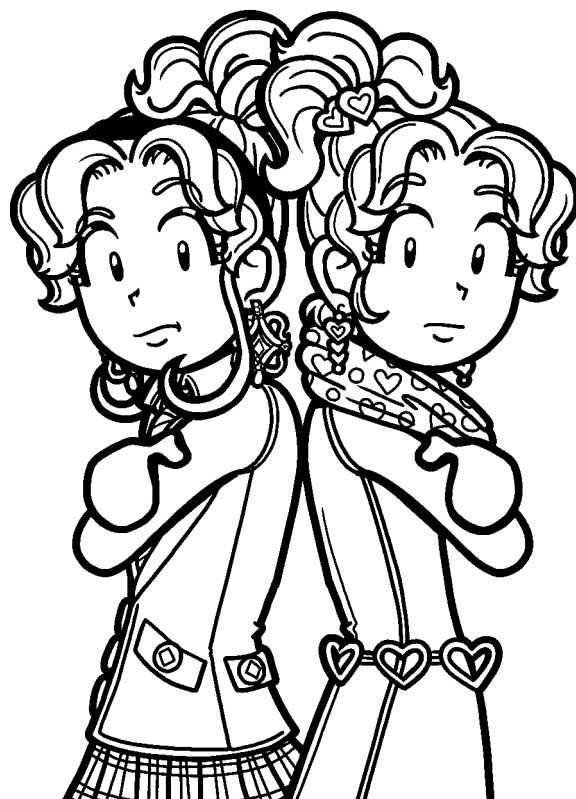
Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Perfect Pet Sitter**



Dork Diaries 10: Tales from a Not-So-Perfect Petsitter

Discussion Questions

1. Nikki believes that her life will be drama-free with MacKenzie out of the picture. Turns out she's wrong about both MacKenzie and the drama. Why do you think that is? Is there anyone in your life that tends to show up inconveniently, or create extra trouble for you?
2. Why do you think MacKenzie borrows stories from Nikki's life rather than being herself around her new classmates? At the CupCakery, why do you think Nikki and Brandon leave instead of immediately exposing MacKenzie's lies? What would you do in a similar situation?
3. In her diary, Nikki writes about procrastinating on many tasks. Why might a person procrastinate on a project or responsibility? Have you ever procrastinated on something important? How does procrastinating make you feel? Does it change the ultimate outcome of whatever you're avoiding?
4. Nikki's diary titles are all about how she doesn't live up to the expectation for a particular role, but the books show how she usually has a good time anyway and makes the most of difficult situations. A big part of her happiness comes from finding a sense of humor when life seems like a comedy of errors. Have you ever experienced something disappointing or embarrassing in the moment but that you can laugh about now? When people say "If I don't laugh, I'll cry," what do they mean?
5. Nikki says when other kids make you feel like an outsider, just believe in yourself. What is your best advice for somebody who feels like they don't fit in? What can you do to help someone who is new to your school and might be feeling left out?
6. Nikki sometimes blurts out an embarrassing comment or silly joke when she is nervous. How do you handle awkward social situations?



Activities

1. Nikki complains about how often MacKenzie lies, but Nikki isn't always completely truthful herself. Find four examples from this diary and complete the chart:

Lie Nikki told	To whom she told it	Why she told it	Outcome/Consequences

2. Have you ever owned a pet, brought home the classroom pet, or taken care of someone else's pet? What characteristics make for a good pet owner or petsitter? What responsibilities are involved in caring for an animal? What tools does someone need for these duties? Diagram your ideal pet caregiver, making sure to label the appropriate clothing/tools as well as indicators of suitable temperament. Write or illustrate a few scenes of this person in action.

3. Nikki uses a Google search to verify that North Hampton Hills International Academy exists and is not just a product of MacKenzie's imagination. Later, she checks the calendar on her school website to make sure the email about Student Exchange Week is not a prank. Where do you go to find out if something you heard is true or not? For each of the following statements, do some research to determine if they are true or false. Explain your research process, cite the sources you ignored and those you selected, and explain what steps you took to determine the credibility of each source.

- A liger is a cross between a male lion and a female tiger.
- If you try to rescue a baby bird, your scent will cause the mother to abandon it.
- A species of tree octopus is endangered.
- It is possible to overdose on H₂O.

4. Nikki initially comes up with four ideas to stop MacKenzie from reporting Fuzzy Friends; however, each idea has a serious downside. Thinking about the possible unintended consequences of our actions is a process that can help us avoid making bad decisions. Think of a bad decision you or someone you know has made recently. Brainstorm at least three alternative actions, and list the likely outcomes.

5. What do you think will happen during the exchange week Nikki spends at MacKenzie's new school, North Hampton Hills International Academy? Describe the central conflict and theme. Create a complete story outline for your prediction with introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

6. You might have heard the phrase “The best laid plans often go awry.” It is adapted from the old Scots poem “To a Mouse” by Robert Burns, which legend says Burns wrote after he ploughed over a mouse’s home. Read the closing stanzas:

But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o’ Mice an’ Men
Gang aft agley,
An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,
For promis’d joy!

Still, thou art blest, compar’d wi’ me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e’e,
On prospects drear!
An’ forward tho’ I canna see,
I guess an’ fear!

What is he talking about? How does this apply to Nikki’s experiences in the Dork Diaries?



DORK diaries

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A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 11:

Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Friendly Frenemy**



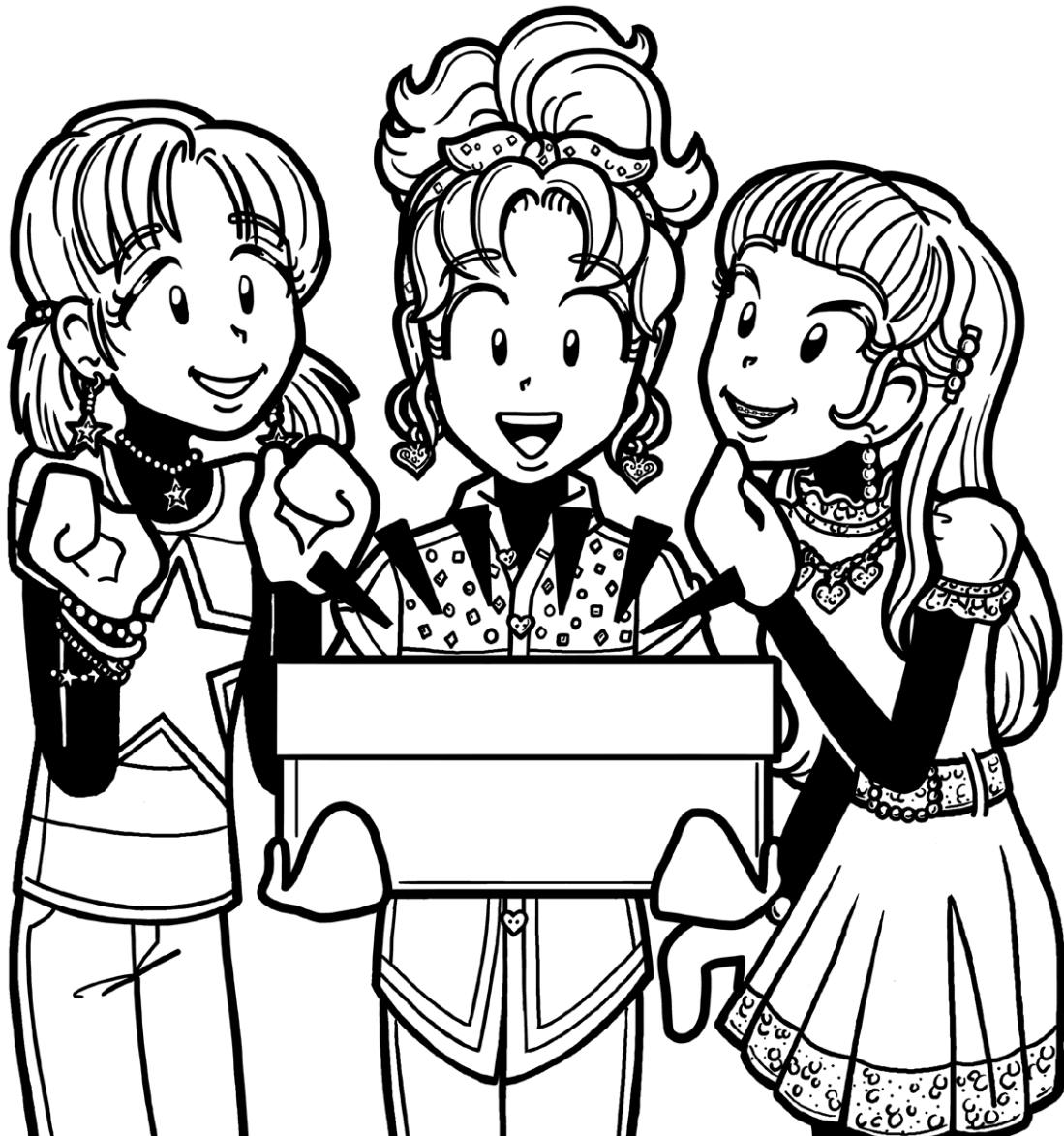
Dork Diaries 11: Tales from a Not-So-Friendly Frenemy

Discussion Questions

1. At first Nikki is not thrilled to learn that she will be spending Student Exchange Week with MacKenzie at North Hampton Hills International Academy. She grows much more excited, however, when she learns that this placement may give her the chance to study art history and French culture in Paris the next summer. If you could be an exchange student locally or abroad, where would you go? Why?
2. Tiffany promises to be Nikki's guide to NHH, taking her on a tour and offering insider advice on each of her classes. Imagine you are a student ambassador, and you have been asked to provide a school orientation to a new exchange student. What would you say or do to welcome the visiting student? What would you advise the student do—or avoid—in his or her time at your school?
3. In this diary, alliances change quickly, with Tiffany first bringing Nikki into the CCP fold at NHH and then dumping her, Nikki and MacKenzie unexpectedly teaming up against Tiffany, and finally MacKenzie announcing her return to WCD and resuming her friendship with Jessica. What makes some loyalties endure? Are there some lines you would never cross? Why or why not?
4. At the end of this diary, Nikki writes that the “Stink Bug Shake” has been nominated for the TeenTV Awesome Awards Best Viral Video of the Year. What do you think makes a video popular? How does it go from popular to “viral?”
5. Brianna's attempt to earn a Scout cooking badge results in some major culinary disasters. What skills are required to successfully cook a meal? What are some common problems you might run into when following a recipe?
6. If your activities this past month could have earned you one scouting badge, what would it be?
7. Nikki is beyond excited to borrow a “classy” NHH school uniform for the week. What are the advantages of having a school uniform? What about the disadvantages? Which would you prefer?
8. Mr. Winter, a biology teacher at NHH, shows a movie every time he loses his lesson plan. If you were a teacher and lost your plans for that day's class, what would you do?

Activities

1. Create a packing list of everything you would need to spend one week in a foreign country—justify everything.
2. Stage your own viral video. Plan everything you'll need, including props and wardrobe. Then create a storyboard for your video, even if you might rely on some improvisation for the final filming.
3. Create a how-to guide for taking the perfect selfie. Include your five best tips for taking a flattering photo, and illustrate your instructions.
4. Nikki tries to make a cheap beauty mask at home to clear up her skin. Research some common foods that can be applied to your skin, hair, or nails as part of a DIY beauty regimen. Imagine you were using your new knowledge to create a custom product. Design a label for your new product. On the label, explain what it does and why a potential consumer should buy it. Be sure your label also includes a warning if it might have side effects—like turning your skin blue.
5. Nikki helps her new friends at NHH save the Science Club. What student club would you love to join? Create a flyer for your new student club, and develop a plan to market the club to potential new members.
6. In one text message, describe your best day ever. Keep it to 160 characters or fewer, but feel free to include emojis. Next, draft a brief description of your worst day ever. Is either message easier to write succinctly? Why or why not?



DORK diaries

written and illustrated by Rachel Renée Russell

A Discussion Guide

Dork Diaries 12:

Tales from a
**NOT-SO-
Secret Crush
Catastrophe**



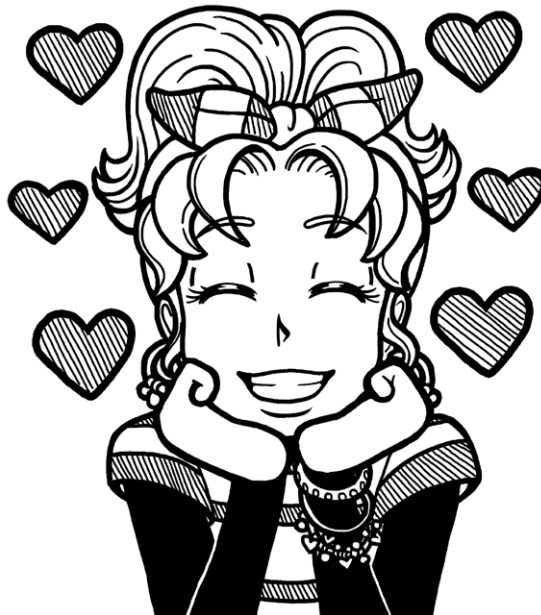
Dork Diaries 12: Tales from a Not-So-Secret Crush Catastrophe

Discussion Questions

1. Chloe and Zoey quickly offer their support and reassure Nikki that she'll survive her intense case of "crush-itis." They also suggest she try not to worry or stress out about it. Nikki attempts to do this, but she finds following their advice easier said than done. Why is it so hard for Nikki? What is the best advice a friend has ever given to you? Did you take it?
2. Nikki's best friends point out that the word "crush" can be a noun and a verb. What are some other words that can serve both functions in a sentence? Can you think of other words that have a different meaning in popular culture than in their dictionary definitions?
3. When Nikki first meets her exchange student and realizes his name is André and not Andrea, she has a "massive meltdown." Imagine what it's like to make an embarrassing mistake, panic, or feel like we've left our brains behind. In a similar situation, how would you calm yourself down and regain confidence?
4. André tells Nikki that she's the only one who can decide what to do about the conflicting dates of her band's tour and her summer study abroad. How do you go about making a difficult decision? Where or when do you seek additional information or advice? How do you adjust your process for different kinds of decisions?
5. Nikki tries to tell her friends about her summer scheduling conflict, but interruptions, anxiety, and bad timing make it difficult. What kinds of topics would you be hesitant or afraid to talk about with friends or family? How do you start a difficult conversation with someone you care about?
6. Nikki has two amazing summer opportunities: touring in a band with her friends or traveling to a foreign country to study a subject she loves. If you had to choose between the two, what would you do? Why?
7. Someone is editing real photos of Nikki and posting them online to mislead others. Her experience reflects a common concern with gossip, bad reporting, and downright fake news surfacing on the internet. Have you seen or heard about other doctored photos or false reports? How can you tell if a photo or text has been altered before being shared?
8. Nikki is horrified by Brianna's misbehavior when their family flies to Indiana.
 - a. Has a friend or family member ever embarrassed you? Describe the situation. How did you handle it? How do you wish you'd responded, whether at the time or afterward?
 - b. What are some individual strategies or transportation policies that might make it easier for families to travel with small children?

Activities

1. Make up your own psychosomatic disease (like “crush-itis”), where a strong emotion can be felt physically in the body. Be sure to detail the cause, symptoms, typical duration, and treatment options.
2. Brandon generously offers to help Nikki teach her family's new puppy some basic obedience. Research popular techniques for dog training. Choose an approach and justify your selection. Then write a basic training schedule, including frequency, duration, and objectives for each session.
3. When she's feeling exhausted and worried about her complicated social life, Nikki says she'd like to be in kindergarten again. Compare and contrast kindergarten with your current grade. Would you want to go back to kindergarten?
4. Nikki repeatedly points out that you can't choose your siblings. If you could, what kind of sibling would you want? Create or find images to represent these ideal characteristics, and write a brief explanation for each. Finally, weigh the relative importance of each characteristic on a scale from one (optional but nice) to five (absolutely required).
5. Imagine that you are helping Brandon to design a website for the Fuzzy Friends Animal Rescue Center. Mock up a website. Be sure to include photos of available pets, opportunities to volunteer, a wish list for donations, advice for selecting a fuzzy family member, and any other information that site visitors might need.



A Note for Teachers

This discussion guide is designed to help your students engage with the text through discussion in small or large groups and through activities completed independently or with classmates. The discussion questions can also be used as writing prompts for independent work. The nature of the questions and activities themselves, as well as the variety of suggested response formats and opportunities for interaction with peers, will help students develop proficiency in many of the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

Guide was written by Michele Gorman, author of *Getting Graphic! Comics for Kids* and *Getting Graphic! Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*.

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