

Stickler and Me

by Morley Torgov

AGES 10 AND UP • GRADE LEVEL 4 TO 8

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the summer of 1961 thirteen year old Ben Marshall is not too happy with his options: a vacation “apprenticing” law under his cranky grandfather Ira, or one spent at stuffy Camp Pinestone. Tired of shuffling between his parents, newly divorced and both too self-absorbed to notice him underfoot, Ben opts for two months in Port Sanford, the less-than-thrilling town where Ira has practiced law for forty years. He soon finds himself embroiled in a moral dilemma that has Ira questioning the rules he has spent his whole life upholding. When Ira’s wealthiest client, Mrs. O’Hearn, dies before he can commit her last wishes to print, he is left with the task of distributing her fortune to ungrateful relatives. What’s worse, when Ira can’t bear to carry out the final request in her will, he and Ben hit the road with the chief of police and a sheriff in hot pursuit.



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YOUNG ADULT FICTION



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morley Torgov is the author of *A Good Place to Come From*, which was made into a CBC mini-series and three plays for stage by Israel Horovitz, and played on and off Broadway in the mid-80s. This title was also a CLA and Book of the Month Club selection. He is also the author of *The Abramsky Variations*, *The Outside Chance of Maximilian Glick*, *St. Farb’s Day* and *The War To End All Wars*. He has written plays for CBC radio and television, and he has twice won the Leacock Medal for Humour. Torgov has written articles for numerous periodicals including *The Globe & Mail*, *Montreal Gazette*, and the *New York Times*. He lives in Toronto where he practices law.



BEFORE THE BOOK • Words You Need to Know

mortified	cynic	dictation	dowager	insatiable	curmudgeon
inherent	obscenity	antiquated	accumulate	prerogatives	pungent
enthusiasm	obstinate	barren	paraphernalia	perfectionist	semantics

• Activities

There are two main characters in this story, Ira and his grandson Ben. Decide which of them said each of the following quotations and then predict what the story will be about.

“Yes, I am having second thoughts.”

“Nobody’s perfect”

“Tell me about the dog.”

“All I want to do is keep you company.”

“I’m sorry you’re not amused”

“How did you know where to find me?”

“I don’t care who he is or what he is. I’m staying put.”

“You look like you just lost your best friend in the whole world.”

“Turn that damn racket off!”

“Good grief, no!”

“He sort of looks like he’s wasting away”

“Stick with me, there’ll never be a dull moment.”

“I don’t care a hoot what you want.”

“I’m not doing it for you, I’m doing it for me.”

“Not guilty, Your Honour.”

EXPLORING THE BOOK • Chapter Questions and Activities

CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

1. What were the occupations of Ben’s mother, father, and grandfather?
2. What was the main reason Ben decided to spend the summer with his grandfather?
3. What did Ben want to do as a career?
4. What is the job of the executor and trustee of an estate?

CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

1. Who were Mrs. O’Hearn’s heirs?
2. Who was Hollis Burden and how did he feel about Ira Lamport?

CHAPTERS FIVE AND SIX

1. Create a character web to describe Ira Lamport.
2. How did Gramps’ story about the burning barn explain his character?
3. What was the worst thing for Gramps about Mrs. O’Hearn’s will?

CHAPTERS SEVEN AND EIGHT

1. What is a holograph will?
2. Why were Mrs. O’Hearn’s heirs upset with Ira Lamport?
3. Why were Mondays the busiest day of the week for Ira Lamport?

CHAPTERS NINE AND TEN

1. How did Ben’s grandfather feel about Ben visiting for the summer?
2. Why did Mrs. O’Hearn think it would be humane to have Josh put down?
3. Why couldn’t Gramps take over the care of Josh?



CHAPTERS ELEVEN AND TWELVE

1. Why did Ira think he was losing his touch?
2. What did Ben mean when he accused his grandfather of “flip-flopping?”
3. What happened at the vet that seemed to change Gramps’ mind?

CHAPTERS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN

1. Use thinking boxes to show what Ben was thinking while he was talking to his grandfather on pages 106-108 when Gramps wakes Ben in the middle of the night. Draw a series of cartoon boxes. In each box draw two speech bubbles. Use solid lines for Ben’s outside voice — what he actually said. Use a cloud shape for his inside voice — what he was thinking.
2. Why was Hollis Burden celebrating?
3. Why was the police chief not worried by Agnes Trimble’s phone call?



CHAPTERS FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN

1. Why did Hollis Burden think Ira and Ben had gone to Toronto?
2. What changed Chief Davidson’s mind about looking for Ira and Ben?

CHAPTERS SEVENTEEN AND EIGHTEEN

1. What did Ira hope to gain by leaving Port Sanford?
2. Create a readers’ theatre presentation of the conversation between Hollis Burden and the Pleasantview Motel receptionist pages 126-128. Read the words spoken by each of the characters and have a narrator fill in the rest.

CHAPTERS NINETEEN AND TWENTY

1. Why did Ben lie to Gramps about seeing the black Jeep?
2. What did Gramps mean when he talked about “creative thinking?”

CHAPTERS TWENTY-ONE AND TWENTY-TWO

1. Why did Ben have to carry Josh while they were at the Summer Fair?
2. Why was Gramps angry with Ben?
3. Who do you think Lena Demarco is?

CHAPTERS TWENTY-THREE AND TWENTY FOUR

1. Look back at your character web of Ira Lamport. Use a different colour to make changes to reflect what you know about him now.
2. Why was Ben so upset with his grandfather?

CHAPTERS TWENTY-FIVE AND TWENTY-SIX

1. How did Chief Davidson know where to find Ira and Ben?
2. Why do you think Ben decided to go back with his grandfather?

CHAPTERS TWENTY-SEVEN AND TWENTY-EIGHT

1. How did Ben convince the magistrate to let him and Josh stay in the room?
2. How did Ben get back at his grandfather?
3. Who was Simon Connybear and what was he doing in Port Sanford?
4. Why did Ben run away with Josh?

CHAPTERS TWENTY-NINE AND THIRTY

1. What were Ira Lampport and Magistrate McEwen fighting about in the courtroom?
2. How did the courtroom battle end?
3. Write the telegram that Gramps sent from his jail cell.
4. What happened between Hollis Burden and Ira Lampport at the end of the story?

BEYOND THE BOOK • Activities

1. Create a Sociogram for this story. Arrange the names of the characters around the central character. Use arrows to connect the names showing the direction of the relationships and label them with the nature of the relationship: e.g. Ira ^{grandfather} → Ben
2. How did the story compare with your predictions at the beginning? Go back and correct your “Who said what?” guesses.
3. Write a sequel to this story including Hollis Burden’s court case against the O’Hearn heirs.
4. What suggestions would you give to Ben to help him cope with his parents?

• Curriculum Extensions

SOCIAL STUDIES *History* • Write a report on the Cold War: how it started, who was involved, how it ended. Write a short biography of John F. Kennedy.

Geography — City of Toronto • Draw a map of the city of Toronto showing the major highways and surrounding suburbs.

Agriculture • Describe the events and activities at a large provincial agricultural fair such as the Pacific National Exhibition, Toronto Summer Fair, or the Royal Winter Fair.

Canadian Law • Compare the duties, training and responsibilities of a sheriff and a police officer. Draw a chart showing the hierarchy of the legal system in Canada.

CAPP *Careers (Lawyer, Police Officer, Veterinarian, Surgeon, Journalist)*
Choose one of the above careers and outline the education that is needed.

Personal Responsibility — Pet Care • Choose a breed of dog or cat and write an essay describing how to take care of it.

FINE ARTS *Music* • Write a biography of Bob Dylan and include a discussion of some of his lyrics.



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Stickler and Me Teacher’s Guide (1-55192-539-7) and other learning resources for Raincoast titles are also available at www.raincoast.com. Many of these activities are inspired by the Reading 44 document published by the North Vancouver School District. Raincoast Books grants teachers permission to photocopy this guide for classroom use.

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