**The Fantastic Secret of Owen Jester**

**By Barbara O’Connor**

Louisiana Young Reader’s Choice Nominee 2013

Grades 3 - 5

*Submitted by Ann Gomez, Youth Services Library Associate, Denham Springs - Walker Branch, Livingston Parish Library System, Denham Springs, Louisiana*

O’Conner, Barbara. *The Fantastic Secret of Owen Jester.* Farrar Straus Girous. 2009. 168 pages.

**SUMMARY**  
  
Owen and his family had to move in with his grandfather in Carter, Georgia. Owen captures a huge beautiful bullfrog and keeps it a secret from his family. Have you ever had a secret so big that you just had to tell someone? Well, Owen had a secret like this and it wasn’t about his bullfrog. He told two of his friends about this incredible secret. The last person he wanted to tell was a bossy, know-it-all girl named Viola. Owen discovers that he will have to tell Viola because he will need someone who is a know-it-all to help him and his friends with this secret. Will Viola be able to keep this incredible secret?   
  
**AWARDS**  
  
Junior Library Guild Selection  
School Library Journal Best Books of the Year 2010   
Kirkus Best Books of the Year 2010  
Kentucky Bluegrass Award Nominee 2012   
Louisiana Young Readers Choice Award Nominee 2013   
Maine Student Book Award Nominee 2012  
Massachusetts Must-Reads 2011  
Nebraska Golden Sower Award Nominee 2013   
New Hampshire Great Stone Face Award Nominee 2012   
New York Public Library 100 Books for Reading and Sharing 2010  
Tennessee Volunteer State Book Award Nominee 2013   
Vermont Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award Nominee 2012  
West Virginia Children's Choice Book Award Nominee 2012  
  
**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**  
  
Barbara O’Connor lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts which is near Boston. She is married and has one son, two dogs, and one cat. She grew up in South Carolina. Mrs. O’Connor has always loved writing. She wrote poems and stories at a very young age. She loves children. She enjoys writing biographies because she likes to read about different lives. She loves to research facts and turn them into stories about lives.  
  
**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**  
  
**Writing:** Have your students research the history of submarines. As a group or individual activity have them write a short paper about one type of sub or a particular submarine: scientific, war sub, commercial, etc.

Here are two websites with information about different kinds of subs: <http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/su/Submarine>.

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/transport/engines-equipment/submarine.htm>

**Art:**

* Draw a picture of what you think the submarine might look like from the inside.
* Make a craft creating a scene as viewed from a submarine porthole: <http://go.tipjunkie.com/kd/659/www.michellelanning.com/2011/06/summer-activity-1.html>.
* Make an Origami Jumping Frog <http://nicehobbies.org/origami-frog>

**Science**:

* Lesson Plan on Water Web and Food Chains in a pond ecosystem: <http://sciencespot.net/Media/pondfoodwebinfo.pdf>
* Classroom project - Construct a scene of pond life in an aquarium
* Have your class learn more about Bullfrogs looking in the library, online and in the encyclopedia. Students can make a list of 10 neat Bullfrog facts and share them.
  + Here is an online source for Bullfrogs and Bullfrog facts: <http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/bullfrog.htm>

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**  
  
1. What is the name of Owen’s frog?  
  
2. Who was the frog named after?  
  
3. Owen and his friends had a secret code word and when the word was pronounced the three of them would flee from Viola. What was the word?  
  
4. Why is Owen so determined to build a cage for his frog?  
  
5. Why does Owen think Viola will not follow them to the pond?  
  
6. While looking for the object that fell from the train, name two to three items that they did find.  
  
7. When Owen found the fallen object what was written on it below the dolphin design?  
  
8. What was the object that fell from the train?  
  
9. Owen tells his grandfather many things except one secret. Is it about his frog or about the object that feel from the train?  
  
10. What did the Water Wonder 4000 turn out to be?  
  
11. What was the first problem about the Water Wonder 4000 did the boys need to resolve?  
  
13. Who had possession of the address label for the crate?  
  
14. What did Owen say to Viola to keep her from telling someone about the submarine?  
  
15. What did Owen finally admit to about Tooley?  
  
16. Did Owen get punished for taking out the submarine out for a ride? If so, what was his punishment?   
  
**WEB SITES**  
  
Barbara O’Connor’s Website  
<http://www.barboconnor.com/>