

Better with Butter by Victoria Piontek

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A girl with anxiety disorder finds an unlikely friend -- and emotional support animal, in the form of an adorable fainting goat.

Twelve-year-old Marvel is afraid of absolutely everything; amusement park rides, food poisoning, earthquakes, and that big island of plastic floating through the ocean. She also obsesses about smaller worries like making friends, getting called on by the teacher, and walking home alone.

Her parents and the school therapist call her worries an anxiety disorder, but Marvel calls them armor. If something can happen, it will. She needs to be prepared.

But when Marvel stumbles on a group of older kids teasing a baby goat that has mysteriously shown up on the soccer field, she momentarily forgets to be afraid and rescues the frightened animal.

Only Butter isn't any old goat. She's a fainting goat. When Butter feels panic, she freezes up and falls over. Marvel knows exactly how Butter feels and precisely what Butter needs, her.

Soon, the two are inseparable, and Butter thrives under Marvel's support. But Butter also helps Marvel. Everything is better with Butter by her side, and Marvel starts to imagine a life in which she doesn't have to be so afraid, until she's told she might have to give up Butter forever. Will Marvel find a way to fight for her friend? Or will she revert back to the anxious, lonely person she used to be?

Discussion, revision & competition-like questions for this book are below.

Reading Rivalry Is Not a test!

Note the Reading Rivalry questions are tools used to discuss the book(s) and topics the students read.

The intent of RR is to foster a love of reading, introduce the students to books they may not otherwise choose, provide opportunities to work as a team and have fun!

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- 1. In Better with Butter, which character has a generalized anxiety disorder?**
Marvel.
- 2. What subject does Marvel have to give a presentation on?**
A famous Californian: Marvel chooses Grandma Prisbrey who built a village out of garbage in the seventies before it was cool.
- 3. What happens to Marvel when she tries to give her speech in front of the entire school?**
Marvel freezes up, she is carried off stage by Principal Huxx and the PE teacher.
- 4. What do a group of eighth graders make fun of?**
A baby goat, named butter.
- 5. Why does Marvel believe that Butter's owner does not deserve her?**
Butter's fur is matted with mud, she stinks like garbage, and she's been left to fend for herself.
- 6. What professions have Marvel's parents?**
Marvel's dad is in the navy and her mom is a landscape designer.
- 7. Which character has a condition called myotonia congenita?**
Butter: myotonia congenita makes goat muscles suddenly tighten when something scares them / they faint easily if someone gives them a fright.
- 8. What do Marvel and Butter have in common?**
Anxiety.
- 9. What do Marvel's mom and Mr. J think she should try to manage her anxiety?**
A therapy group.
- 10. Which of Marvel's family members arrives for a surprise visit?**
Marvel's dad.
- 11. Where do Marvel and Butter sleep during a thunderstorm?**
In the garage.
- 12. What does Principal Huxx say about Marvel's attendance in school?**
Marvel's absences are excessive, her grades are suffering, she is in danger of failing sixth grade.
- 13. What important project is a big part of Marvel's final grade?**
The school play, it is a big percentage of her final grade.

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14. What nickname does Jamie give Marvel after her speech is shown to the language arts class?

Frosty.

15. Why does Marvel's mom worry about butter?

She worries Marvel will become too attached to Butter and Marvel will not use her breathing strategies to help her with her anxiety.

16. What type of poster does Marvel make?

Marvel intentionally made a blurry and unclear lost and found poster. "Lost creature."

17. In Better with Butter, what material does Butter often eat or try to eat?

Paper.

18. Which school official is angry that Marvel took Butter to school?

Principal Huxx.

19. What does Butter need to do to become Marvel's emotional support animal at school?

Pass an obedience test.

20. What does Butter destroy?

An important box of state tests.

21. Who calls and asks for Marvel to come visit Butter at the goat farm and why?

Gloria Fizzle because Butter stopped eating and drinking. They believe Marvel may help.

22. Who does Gloria decide to give Butter to?

Marvel.

23. In Better with Butter, which character forgets his lines during the school play?

Jamie.

Discussion Questions.

1. What is your favorite thing about the book?
2. "You've got to take control over your own life. Believe in yourself. Be the master of your destiny" Discuss.
3. If you find a lost pet you like, should you keep the pet or try to find the owner? Why?
4. What breathing strategies do you know? {There are several, here are just a few examples- Blow out the candle, Oops Johnny, Belly breath, Flower breathing, Rainbow breathing}.