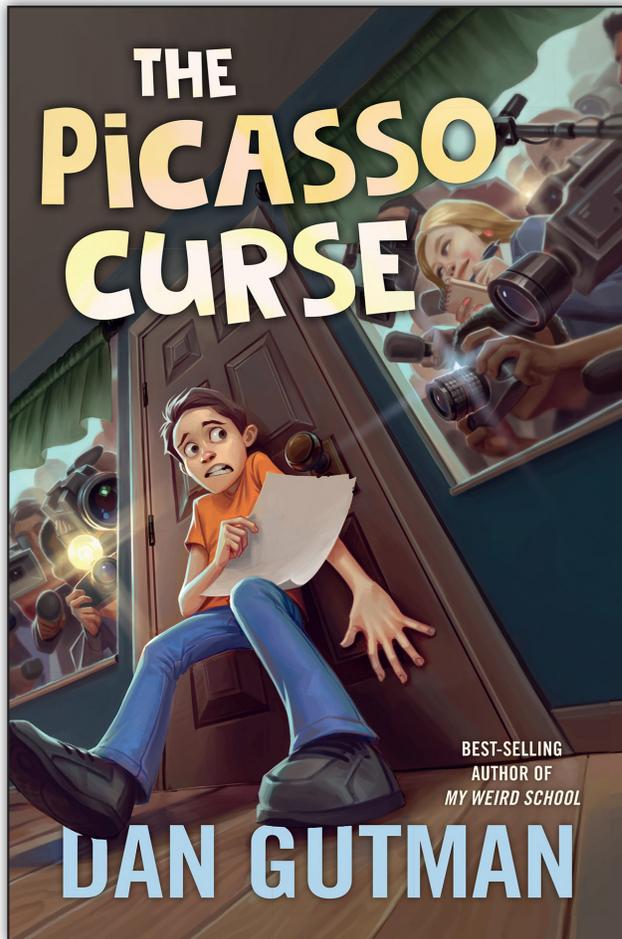


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



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The Picasso Curse by Dan Gutman

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

★“Brief, fourth-wall-breaking chapters dive into the history and lore of Picasso, an information free-for-all that Gutman delivers with his signature snark and panache. Propulsive and entertaining, this is an exciting adventure of complex ethical questions and derring-do that centers topics such as decision-making and independence.”—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

ABOUT THE BOOK

What would happen if you accidentally bought a doodle worth millions? Edwin Hodge finds out in this middle grade novel by Dan Gutman, best-selling author of the *My Weird School* series.

There were so many things Edwin Hodge didn't know when he paid \$10 for a cool poster of Kobe Bryant at the local flea market.

He didn't know that hidden within the frame of the poster was an original drawing by Pablo Picasso, one of the most famous artists in history. He didn't know the Picasso might be worth millions of dollars. He didn't know that kids at school were going to treat him differently, or that he would become a world-famous social media superstar.

And he sure didn't know that people would tap his phone, follow him home, break into his house, or threaten to burn it down. He didn't know the Picasso was going to ruin his life.

Have you ever had to make a decision—a really hard decision? A decision that would change the course of your life from that moment on? Edwin is faced with lots of crucial decisions in this gripping adventure, a blend of fact and fiction by Dan Gutman, an author who says, “I want my readers to think that reading my books is like watching a movie. One where you never know what's going to happen next.”



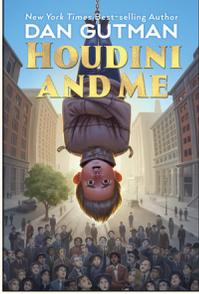
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Chapter 1 introduces Edwin Hodge and relates how he gets a doodle believed to be created by Pablo Picasso. Explain how information on p. 10 foreshadows events later in the book.
- How does the author use flashback in the novel? How does this contribute to the reader's understanding of Edwin's predicament?
- Explain why the theft of the *Mona Lisa from the Louvre* in Paris is important to the story. Why is Picasso a suspect?
- Who were the Wild Men of Paris? What was their mission? How do the men eventually betray one another? Explain why the judge releases them after they are arrested.
- Discuss how the doodle created by Pablo Picasso found its way from Paris to the Woodside flea market in Illinois.
- How does the doodle fall into Edwin's hands? Describe Vinnie Campanella. Why does he think the Bryant poster and the doodle belong to him? Explain the phrase "The early bird gets the worm." (p. 8) How does this apply to Edwin?
- Explain why Clementon, Illinois, is considered an unlucky town. Cite specific scenes to support your thoughts. How does the Picasso doodle change the entire town?
- Miss Castillo, Edwin's art teacher, thinks the doodle should be displayed. Why is Edwin reluctant to put the artwork on his wall?
- What is the meaning of the phrase "kick the can down the road"? (p. 46) Discuss the many decisions that Edwin faces. How often does he "kick the can down the road"?
- Edwin and his parents take a trip to the Art Institute of Chicago. What is the purpose of their trip? Edwin's father is always worried about money. Why does he agree to spend money to authenticate the doodle?
- Edwin and his parents meet Ellen, a graduate student in art history; Professor Ronald DiPilla; and Professor Julie Watson, a Picasso expert. How do they provide the information the Hodge family is seeking? Discuss the options that Professor DiPilla lays out for the doodle.
- What is the Picasso Curse? Why are the art experts unwilling to share it with the Hodges? What is Ellen's advice to Edwin? Debate why Edwin thinks he has been targeted with the curse.
- Describe Mr. Ledger, the man from the flea market. What is a con artist? How is Mr. Ledger a con artist? Discuss how Edwin deals with him. Define quid pro quo. Explain how Mr. Ledger tries to use a quid pro quo in a second attempt to acquire the doodle from Edwin. (p. 109) Why is Edwin suspicious of him?
- Trust is mentioned throughout the novel. Why doesn't Edwin's father trust most people? Discuss Edwin's lack of trust in Mr. Ledger. Why does Edwin trust Brian Donahue, the host of "Brian Ain't Lyin'" a show aired on local TV news?
- Why are Edwin's parents upset with their son for talking with Mr. Donahue? What happens after Brian Donahue airs the interview with Edwin?



- Edwin’s school seems proud of his interview with Brian Donahue. Explain what Edwin’s teacher, Mrs. Sharp, means when she announces they have “an elephant in the room.” (p. 101)
- How do people treat Edwin when they think he has money? Describe the people who suddenly befriend him. Define paranoid. Why does Edwin become paranoid?
- Edwin confides in Miss Castillo about his predicament. Discuss her role in helping him solve his problem. Why does she refuse the doodle when Edwin offers it to her?
- The last scene is dramatic, but open-ended. What do you think Edwin does with the doodle on the final countdown?

Also by DAN GUTMAN



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Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

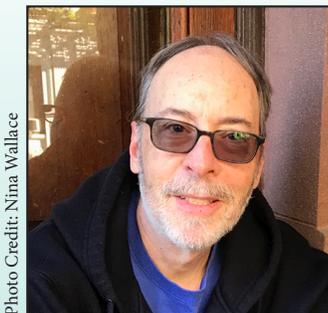


Photo Credit: Nima Wallace

Dan Gutman grew up in New Jersey loving sports, which inspired him as an adult to write his baseball card book series that begins with *Honus & Me* and which was nominated for eleven state awards and adapted for television. Other titles of his include the My Weird School series, *The Homework Machine*, the Genius Files series, *The Kid Who Ran for President*, and Holiday House’s own *Houdini and Me*, *The (Mostly) True Story of Cleopatra’s Needle*, and *The Picasso Curse*. He lives with his wife in New York City. Learn more at DanGutman.com.