

# GREEN PEAS RULE 2

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE GLORY,  
IT'S ABOUT THE MESSAGE.



I get a few low fives as I make my way back to class. Green Peas isn't a total secret at Watterson Primary, but kids here don't dob on each other. I mean, if someone is hurting another kid or bullying them or something, there's no code – you absolutely go down for something like that. But when it comes to 'kids' business', we sort of look out for each other.

I take my usual seat in Mr Deery's class between Zeke and Cookie. Cookie gives me a slight nod – she's so cool and super-spy-like. Zeke's breaking the rules as usual. He's grinning ear to ear and gives

me a double thumbs-up. I just ignore him. It's the approach I often take with Zeke.

Mr Deery stumbles in looking pretty frazzled. It took a long time for the teachers to get everyone under control, out of assembly and back to their classes. Mr Deery used to teach Year Five, but everything got reshuffled when Mr Bijac went on paternity leave. It was a good trade. Mr Bijac smelled like feet. But not just his feet smelled like feet. His suit smelled like used socks. His aftershave smelled like old leather. And his breath . . . well, you know the black stuff that builds up under the corners of your toenails? Mr Bijac's breath smelled like he ate that for breakfast. **BLAH!**

So Mr Deery and his peppermint smell is a definite upgrade.

'Okay, kids, we're going to try to move on from this morning's little, um, disruption,' Mr Deery says, rearranging the papers on his desk for the third time.

'Disruption'. I like that. It's a much better word than 'prank'.

Well done, Mr Deery, that's exactly what we're trying to do – disrupt the way the world is going. I scribble the word 'disruption' in my workbook.

Mr Deery finally finds the book he's looking for and waves it at the class. 'Can we all get our workbooks out, turn to page thirty-four, and we'll put this morning behind us and get onto some learning?'

A crackle in the speaker on the ceiling tells me Mrs Keiren has other ideas.

'Students!' Mrs Keiren's voice screeches through the speaker. It's so loud and distorted that it sounds like she has the microphone shoved halfway down her throat. 'Today's display of anarchy will not be tolerated.'

I jot down the word 'anarchy' on the corner of my workbook. I like the sound of that one too. Not the sound of it squawking through the speakers at me care of Mrs Keiren, of course, but the sound of it as I roll it around in my head. I make a note to look it up later.

'These pranks are no laughing matter, and the students behind them will be found, mark my word. You may think you're making some kind

of statement, but this is NOT the way to make yourself heard.'

I disagree. No one listens to you when you're a kid, even when you have something really important to say. We tried to ask the supermarket at Watto Mall to stop using single-use plastic bags, but we couldn't even speak to anyone higher up than the half-asleep seventeen-year-old who ran the assistance counter. Which, by the way, should definitely be renamed. The Green Peas events are my way – our way – of yelling so loud they can't ignore us.

The screeching continues. 'I expect *anyone* who knows *anything* about this matter to report to my office and give themselves, or the offending students, up immediately!'

The speaker crackles once more and falls silent. Mr Deery sighs.

'Does anyone want to come forward?' Mr Deery asks, looking around the classroom. The kids all look at each other. Zeke, Cookie and I join in. Nobody raises their hand. I love my school.

'Very well, then. Let's put the matter behind us and move on with our comprehension exercises.'

As Mr Deery opens up his exercise book, Mac Cooper's hand shoots up. I hold my breath for a second. I don't know if Mac knows about us. He's a bit of a muso at school, plays guitar in a band and has that special ability to look blasé about pretty much everything. 'Blasé' basically means 'whatevs', but it sounds way more sophisticated, don't you think? It's one of my new favourite words. Anyway, Mac seems like a cool kid. I don't think he'd dob us in. But you never know.

Mr Deery looks up. 'Yes, Mac?'

'Maybe instead of just ignoring the prank or trying to bust the kids who did it, we should talk about why it happened.' Mac flicks his hair away from his eyes and shrugs.

Maybe Mac's not just a cool muso type after all. I'm impressed. I take back my label of blasé and make note to find a more appropriate adjective for Mac. I turn to Mr Deery, super keen to hear his answer.

'Okay,' he says, closing the book in front of him. 'What do you want to talk about?'

'Not sure,' says Mac. 'But it's not just another prank, right? I mean whoever's doing it is trying

to get our attention. To – you know – think about our planet and how we’re wrecking it. I mean it’s kinda scary for us kids. With climate change and everything, are we even gonna have a planet to live on?’

My belly’s doing flip flops. This is EXACTLY what I wanted. Mr Bijac would have shut this conversation down by now, but Mr Deery is different.

He nods. ‘You’re right, Mac. I agree: it’s scary. Does anyone else worry about this sort of thing?’ Every hand shoots up, including my own.

‘All right then,’ he says. ‘Let’s talk about it. Comprehension can wait until after lunch.’

We all close our books.

Mr Deery rubs his forehead. ‘Now, it’s a pretty big subject. Does anyone have anywhere in particular they want to start?’

Every hand in the class shoots up again.

Mr Deery points to Isla. ‘Let’s start with you, Isla.’

She drops her hand. ‘I think it’s really hard to know what we should do about it. I mean, I don’t

really like being in big crowds at protests, or public speaking, but I want to help too.'

Mr Deery nods. 'I think the first thing we should talk about is how you can find your own way to take a stance for what you believe in. Some people do it through science or politics, and others through protests or writing. Why don't we talk about some of the ways you can help. Any ideas?'

Hands go up again.

I can't hide my grin this time. See! I knew kids have a lot to say.



I quickly scribble down the word 'apathetic' in my folder as I race to the garden shed. I just needed to check a few words with Mr Deery after class, so Zeke and Cookie went ahead without me.

My handwriting's terrible because it's super hard to run and write at the same time, but I don't want to forget this word. Mr Deery said it at the very end of class when we were talking about why grown-ups don't do more about what's happening to our planet. I want to make sure I don't forget it.

I've always loved new words. I want to have a really big vocabulary so that I can explain exactly what I'm thinking and how I'm feeling. Writing's my favourite subject at school for sure. Maybe I'll be a writer when I grow up. But probably an activist. I wonder if you can be both. Zeke's stepdad has two jobs, so why not?

Realising I've slowed to a walk, I run the rest of the way to the garden shed.

I do the secret knock and Zeke lets me in. 'Sorry I'm late.'

'No worries,' he says. 'Mr Deery said a bunch of new words that I figured you'd want to add to the list.'

Sometimes I think Zeke knows me too well.

I take a seat next to Cookie and pass her the Green Peas folder. Her t-shirt today says, 'TREES ARE PEOPLE TOO', and there's a cartoon of a girl hugging a tree.

'One of yours?' I ask.

Cookie nods. 'Dad and Aaron got me a bunch of new t-shirt transfer paper for my birthday. This was the tester.'



‘I love it.’ Cookie always makes the best shirts.

I turn to Zeke. ‘Did you collect the cameras?’ He’s always in charge of making sure our events are recorded.

He pats his satchel. I know – what eleven-year-old has a satchel? It’s so antiquated. It’s so . . . Zeke!

‘Roger!’ he says, giving me a salute.

‘Just say *yes*, Zeke.’

‘Roger that,’ he says again.

I give up.

The garden shed gives a metallic grumble as it leans in the wind. This is where we meet every second lunchtime – unless there’s an event coming up, and then the meetings are more often. No . . . more frequent. I heard that word on the news last night. ‘More frequent bushfires are an effect of global climate change.’ I like words with a ‘Q’ in the middle. They sound fancy. No . . . they sound eloquent.

Zeke sits up straight, like he’s reporting for duty. ‘I snuck the cameras back out of the hall without anyone suspecting a thing,’ he says proudly. ‘I even came back to class with a small piece of

toilet paper stuck to my foot to convince everybody that I'd actually gone to the bathroom. It was very ninja-like.'

I look at Zeke from under my eyebrows. 'You're *not* a ninja, Zeke.'

'Well, wouldn't it be very ninja-like for someone to be a ninja and for their best friend-slash-neighbour to not even know they were a ninja?' Zeke tilts his head to the side. 'Hmm? Think about it.'

I turn to Cookie. She's much easier to deal with.

'Great banner today, Cookie. I especially enjoyed the little T-Rex you did munching on the "T".'

Cookie opens our Green Peas folder up in her lap. 'Actually, it was a Diplodocus. They're vegetarian so they only eat . . . "T"s!'

Zeke slaps his leg. 'Ha! I get it. "T"s! Trees! And it's a layered message because they're vegetarian. Get it, Casey?'

I glare at him. 'Yes, Zeke, thank you. I get it.'

'So good, Cookie,' he says, shaking his head. 'So, so good.'

Cookie laughs. ‘Thanks, Zeke. I appreciate your appreciation.’

‘All right,’ I say, tapping my finger on the folder. ‘Can we get back to it? What’s next on the agenda?’

Cookie thumbs through the official Green Peas folder and stops on today’s page. ‘You wanted to do Plastic Attack next weekend.’

I rub my chin dramatically, deep in contemplation. ‘Contemplation’ is even deeper thinking than thought. Super deep. ‘No, I don’t think we’ll be ready for next weekend. The alarm clock prank took a bit more preparation than I expected and it’s put us behind schedule.’

Zeke grins at me. ‘But it was awesome.’

I let a small smile creep onto my lips. ‘Yes, Zeke. It was awesome.’ I know Rule 2 says, ‘It’s not about the glory, it’s about the message’, but seeing Mrs Keiren jump into the air at that chicken noise – that was the kind of glory that’s hard not to enjoy.

Cookie gets us back on our agenda. ‘How does Plastic Attack work? Is it something I can help fast track?’

I refocus. ‘That’s the one where everyone has to bring containers and stuff to the supermarket to do

their shopping, and before they leave they unpack everything packaged in single-use wrapping and leave the plastic at the front of the store. I saw a video of it in the Netherlands. There was a huge pile of plastic showing the supermarkets how much waste they cause. We should do it at Watto Mall, seeing as we didn't have much luck with the plastic bag thing.'

Cookie takes notes. 'Well, I can definitely do signs and stuff, but yeah, I reckon we need a bit more time to really spread the word. How about I put it down for next month?'

'Okay,' I agree. 'But it would be good to do something else before then.'

Zeke holds his finger in the air like a cartoon character having an idea. 'How about we put whoopee cushions on all the teachers' chairs that say, "You stink . . . but garbage stinks more! RECYCLE!"'

I grab his finger and drag it down. 'What did we discuss about the whoopee cushions? We're trying to go for a more sophisticated image, remember?'

Zeke nods. 'Yeah, sorry, it's just sometimes my brain has a mind of its own.'

Cookie laughs. 'How can your brain have a . . .' she starts, but stops when I give her 'the look'.

I point to the folder again. 'Let's move on, shall we?'

The school garden shed is not that bad this time of year. In summer it's so hot that after fifteen minutes we start to steam like dim sum. We've been meeting here for almost a year now. It's been that long since I started Green Peas, our covert environmental activism group. I got the idea from Mum.

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## **Trixie Wu's Thoughts On . . .**

### **YOUR TRIBE**

It's important to find your tribe, Casey. That doesn't necessarily mean people like you, it means people who complement you. Some people educate. Some people learn. Some lead. Some follow. Some shout. Some whisper. Your tribe should be a beautiful mix of it all. Find the friends that make you a better person and then hold on tight.

xMum



You can't be a group on your own. Not even a covert group. So I hunted for my tribe. The Green Peas' first member (other than me) was Zeke, mostly because he was the only other kid I really knew. People always ask me if Zeke is my best friend. Truth is, my grandpa's my best friend, but I would never admit that out loud. Zeke's definitely my longest friend, though.

Cookie joined the group because I saw her wearing a t-shirt that said, 'THERE'S NO PLANET B'. I asked her where she bought it and she told me she'd made it. She buys all her clothes at Vinnies and then creates designs to transfer onto them. I pretty much thought that was the coolest thing ever, and so, of course, I asked her to join the group. She even designed Green Peas t-shirts for us, which made us so much more legitimate. Or, as they say on any B-grade TV reality show – totes legit!

And so now this is us, the Green Peas: Casey Wu, Zeke McKillop and Cookie Munsta. Cookie's real name is Chloe, but she HATES it when people call her that. She made the teacher

change the roll call on her **FIRST DAY** at school! I don't think I spoke a single word on my first day of school.

But I digress (a great word which means to go off on a total tangent . . . like I'm doing again now). Green Peas are defenders of the planet, creators of anarchy, kids demanding to be heard (while staying completely anonymous and out of detention). We all bring something different to the group. Cookie's super creative and arty (and definitely the coolest of us). Zeke is the tech-guy (and definitely **NOT** a ninja, no matter what he says). And me? I guess I'm the organiser. The planner. Maybe the ideas person? I'm still working it out. I'll get back to you.

The garden shed groans in the wind again and leans at an awkward angle. Zeke points to the giant pile of plastic water bottles that's threatening to topple down on his head. 'Have you decided what you want to do with those yet?'

I shake my head. 'Not yet, but keep collecting them. Once we have enough, we'll do something to make the canteen stop selling them. I mean

seriously, how hard is it to bring a drink bottle and use the fountain?’

‘And cheaper,’ says Cookie.

A bottle rolls from the top and the pile sways enough to suggest an avalanche might be coming. ‘Maybe we could borrow a box from the art room to put them all in,’ I suggest.

‘Roger that!’ says Zeke.

I can’t handle him anymore. ‘All right, let’s wrap it up.’

‘There *was* one more thing,’ says Zeke.

‘What?’

‘Our secret handshake. I really think we need one.’

I shake my head at him. ‘I really think we don’t.’

Zeke slides his satchel over his shoulder as he stands up. ‘Okie dokie. Maybe at the next meeting then.’ He salutes me and walks out of the garden shed.

Cookie follows him, but stops at the door and turns to me. ‘You know you could try to be a bit nicer to him,’ she says.



I sigh. ‘I don’t mean to be rude. But he’s just so . . .’

‘Zeke?’ Cookie smirks.

‘Exactly!’ I follow Cookie out and watch Zeke head straight for the computer room.

See, SO Zeke!