



**Axle Annie and the Speed Grump**  
**By Robin Pulver (robinpulver.com)**  
**Illustrated by Tedd Arnold**

## Teacher Guide

About the book:

Axle Annie, Burskyville's best, most beloved school bus driver, has a big problem. And that problem has a name: Rush Hotfoot. He is an absolute menace--always in a hurry and in a bad mood, driving full blast. He even ignores the bus's stop-sign arm! But if anybody can tame the speed grump, Annie can. She has both hands on the wheel and nerves of steel.

Children will giggle and cheer for this friendly, silly charmer about the kind of superhero they might see every day.

About the author:

Robin Pulver has written many books for children, including Axle Annie (the first book about the best-ever school bus driver), Nobody's Mother is in Second Grade, Punctuation Takes a Vacation, Christmas for a Kitten, and the Mrs. Toggle books. She lives in Pittsford, New York. Read more about her on her website: [www.robinpulver.com](http://www.robinpulver.com)

## Author Interview:

I. Why did you decide to give Axle Annie another story?

The easy answer is, my editor asked me to write another story about Axle Annie. Many stories I write still get rejected, so I was happy to know that this one was WANTED, before I put in all the

work on it. Also, I love the Axle Annie character. And I wanted to write about the problem of reckless drivers, which is a problem school bus drivers and their passengers face every day.

2. What's the craziest thing you ever saw someone do while driving?

I once actually saw somebody who had a little desktop set up next to his steering wheel. He was drawing and writing. While driving!

3. Tell the truth: are you more like Annie or Rush?

The truth is I'm not like either one. I'm not as brave as Axle Annie. I admire school bus drivers, but I wouldn't want to be one!

I'm not as thoughtless or reckless or speedy as Rush Hotfoot. I NEVER talk on the phone while I'm driving, and I don't pluck my nose hairs either. But I do sometimes make careless mistakes, which remind me that driving a car is a huge responsibility and requires full attention.

4. Whose writing has most influenced your own?

Very hard to say. So many authors have inspired me. The first ones were Maurice Sendak (Where the Wild Things Are), William Steig (Amos and Boris, and Sylvester and the Magic Pebble) and Rosemary Wells (countless books!)

5. What can we look forward to next?

I'd rather not say until it's ALL DONE.

Pre-reading:

Do you know what it means to be a reckless driver or a menace on the road? What behaviors might you see someone do who is not a safe driver? Can kids ever be reckless with their bikes?

Questions to consider:

1. Compare Rush Hotfoot's driving to Axle Annie's.
2. Why do kids like Axle Annie so much?
3. Describe Great Gulping Gulch Bridge.
4. What does "bearing down fast" mean? Can you give an example?
5. Do you ever notice people doing silly (even reckless) things while driving?
6. Why did Annie visit the Grump Club? Did it help?
7. Explain how Rush ends up with a ticket.
8. What happens to Rush on the Great Gulping Gulch Bridge?
9. Do you think it was safe for Annie to help? Should people help others even if it puts them in danger? What can someone always do in an emergency that is helpful?
10. What consequence does Rush face for his actions? What did he learn?

# Across the Curriculum

## Language Arts:

Drama: In the Aug/Sept 2006 issue of LIBRARYSPARKS Magazine find a reader's theater script for Axle Annie and the Speed Grump! Perform this terrific piece for one class or many!

Research or brainstorm the five most important rules in the following areas: bus safety, bicycle safety, and playground safety. Then, write the rules in the simplest words that you can and illustrate them. Post these rules where everyone can refer to them or give presentations to younger classes in small groups about safety.

## Math:

Take a brief safety survey of at least ten people on the following questions and then graph the results:

Do you wear a seatbelt every time you're in a car?

Do you wear a bike helmet each time you ride?

Have you ever had an accident?

## Art:

Study the pictures that Tedd Arnold created for Axle Annie and the Speed Grump. You'll notice that each picture is created from a different perspective or angle (just like a photographer decides how to frame a picture). Some are close-ups, others are wide views and a few are from top or bottom! Now, study the illustrations you created for the language arts project and redraw at least three of them from different angles. Try a close-up or a wide angle. Explain why you picked the perspective that you did in a short paragraph on the back.

For young children, Print out Tedd Arnold's Axle Annie drawing under Fun Stuff in Robin Pulver's website ([www.robinpulver.com](http://www.robinpulver.com))

(This is the drawing of Axle Annie's passenger making eye contact with Annie, before crossing the street.) Discuss what's happening in the picture. Color it!

## Music:

Sing this song about the book to the tune "Home on the Range"

Oh give us a break  
For Axle Annie's sake  
And the kids who ride her bus too  
Don't gulp, shave or pluck  
You could hit a large truck

And we might not be there to save you!

**Be sure to look for all the other teacher guides for Robin Pulver's books!**

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of Reaching for Sun. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.