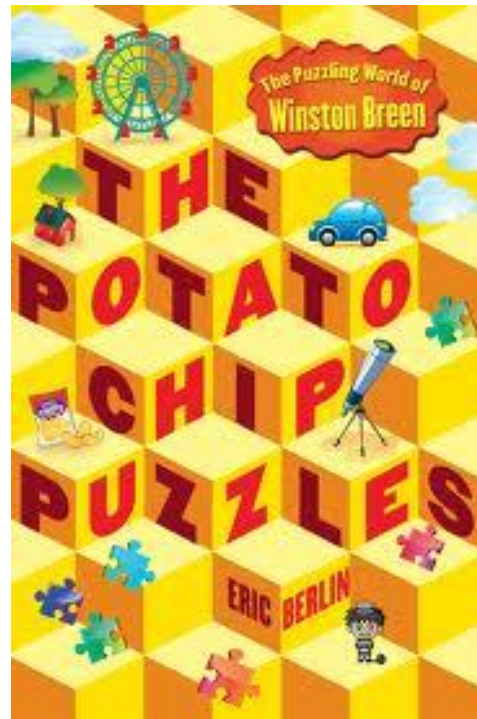


***The Potato Chip Puzzles* by Eric Berlin (Penguin, 2009)**

Winston Breen is excited about participating in a puzzle contest sponsored by Simon's Snack Foods. But the day is not all fun and games – the puzzles are really hard, the other schools' teams are very competitive, and someone is playing dirty in order to win the \$50,000 grand prize.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of a mind does Winston Breen have?
2. The girl's team and Winston's team can't find the first puzzle and they agree to join together to look for it, but when Mr. Garvey and Winston discover it is in the Planetarium, Mr. Garvey ditches the girls. In the book (p. 72) Winston describes his friend Jake as "competitive, very competitive – but he was what Winston's dad called the right kind of competitive. If he won, he wanted to know he had earned it right from the start, fair and square." Why is Jake so upset that Mr. Garvey left the girls behind?
3. Winston thinks about what they did to the girls. (p. 71) "Winston wasn't entirely sure their teacher had cheated. He had played a trick, certainly – offered to help another team and then snatched that help away. It was bad sportsmanship, but was it cheating?" Do you think it is cheating?
4. Why do you think Winston insisted that his friends Jake and Mal join him as part of the team, even when Mr. Garvey wanted to put his own team together? How did Jake and Mal prove themselves over the course of solving the six puzzles?
5. On p. 88 Mal asked, "Are all these teachers crazy?" How are the teachers behaving that would lead Mal to say this?
6. After Jake tries to tackle the accomplice, and captures his bag, how does Mr. Garvey use this evidence to convince several other teams to quit? How do you feel about Mr. Garvey's tactics in here?
7. Do you think it is ok to bend the rules to win? Why do you think the teacher who was the cheater went to such extremes in order to win?
8. What happened after Winston's team discovered the answer to the last puzzle? Why did Mr. Garvey decide to tell the truth about what happened after they solved the sixth puzzle?



9. Initially Winston and his friends Jake and Mal are not enthusiastic about the overzealous, competitive Mr. Garvey – do you think they changed their minds by the end of the contest? Why?

10. What was your favorite puzzle? Did you think any puzzle was especially hard? Caroline Ward,
Coordinator, Youth Services, The Ferguson Library