

# HACKMATAACK

## 2006

### ***The Puppet Wrangler***

by Vicki Grant

*The Puppet Wrangler* is a comic adventure novel set in the children's television industry. Because of a difficult family situation, Telly Mercer is sent from her home in small-town Nova Scotia to stay with her aunt in Toronto. Kathleen is a single, high-profile television producer who doesn't have the time or the insight to deal with a shy 12-year old. She more or less abandons the girl on the set of her show, "Bitsie and Bytesie". Telly is taken under the wing of the kind-hearted puppet wrangler who teaches her the tricks of the trade. When she's dragged off on a wild adventure by the irascible star of the show, Telly uses her knowledge of the industry to save herself, her friends and the ill-fated show.

This book is about the television industry but it is also about feeling alone and powerless -- not uncommon for kids just entering adolescence. Telly would much prefer to hide away from the world and all its problems. Luckily, her family and most of her newfound friends are just nutty enough to need her. Helping them helps Telly to become confident and curious.



#### **Thematic Links:**

Television production  
Television versus reality  
Self-confidence  
Fantasy  
Puppets and puppetry  
Friendship

#### **Activity Ideas:**

- Develop a pitch for a television show you would like to see.
- Write a scene for an episode of "Bitsie and Bytesie" that would better suit Bitsie's personality.
- Research puppets through history. What were some of the most famous ones? How were they made and used?
- Make a puppet. Put on a show.
- Watch a children's television show that uses puppets as characters. Write a review, analyzing its strengths and weaknesses and whether you would recommend it to a young audience.