

## Vernon Gonna-Be-on-the-Banned-Book-List-Soon Little

By Justin Zickar  
Editor-in-Chief

Satire and Cleverness- that is how D.B.C. Pierre gets through to his audience. *Vernon God Little* is a novel bursting with adventure and plot twists to keep the reader guessing and enthralled in this "unexpectedly moving first novel," according to Joyce Carol Oates, writer for the New Yorker.

Since as this is Pierre's first novel, it is somewhat surprising that the prestigious Booker Prize award was given to the book. Born in Australia as Peter Finlay, Pierre moved between Mexico City and Texas for about twenty years, which provides some inspiration and attributes to his character's point of view. Pierre although now does not reside in America; he lives in Ireland.

The setting is Texas. Vernon, a young adolescent approaching sixteen, has just witnessed a tragic event, one that could easily scar any human for the rest of their life.

We find ourselves in a situation with Vernon dealing with his "condition." After Vernon returns to school he finds the bodies of classmates and then sees his best friend pull the gun on himself. At the end of the massacre, there are a total of sixteen deaths, with Vernon the prime suspect and witness.

After accusations are made regarding Vernon, he flees to Mexico. During his adventure through the country of "Meskins" (Mexicans), another eighteen people are killed in related incidents around Texas. Due to the unfortunate circumstances, virtually everyone believes Vernon to be guilty simply because people need a "skate-goat" (scapegoat), as Vernon would put it. He is accused of thirty-four murders, including sixteen classmates. While many question the importance of profanity in the novel, the language perfectly illustrates that of teenagers in America today. Adolescents have a crude use of language and will

throw out a curse word if they can fit it into their sentence. Vernon, a fifteen year old, manages to curse about as much as the typical teenager does (which is about every other sentence, unfortunately).

*Vernon God Little* brilliantly depicts Pierre's clever concept of exposing the negatives of America. Profanity, the media, drugs, alcohol, and ever-growing fast-food chains are some of the inspirations for Pierre's writing.

Pierre also pokes fun at the dominance of media and reality television's grip on American culture. The basic principle is that "Criminals cost money. Popular television makes money. Put them together and, presto- problem solved." In the story, the newest program on television involves exploiting death row inmates in their cells. The viewers at home are given the chance to vote who get executed next. This is mostly based on how they do or do not entertain the audience. It coincides perfectly with the mounting interest in reality

shows, such as "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race".

One of Vernon's mottos can fit into the lifestyle of teens as well. His best friend, the one responsible for the massacre, Jesus, told him, "If at first you don't succeed...get wasted off your f\*\*\*\*\* a\*\*." When Vernon cannot cope with the troubles of his life he turns to alcohol like so many others in today's world.

As for the ending to this fantastic book, it is best discovered on your own. The ending exemplifies the reversals in the story and catches the reader off-guard. As the readers are entranced by the adventure of *Vernon God Little*, they are taken to a new universe where the world around them is brought to light.

## Holiday 2006: Giving Up the Green?

By Steve Holland  
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In our lives we are constantly bombarded with many different forms of persuasion and propaganda. During the holiday season we see even more advertisements than we would normally. As consumers, we fuel our economy by purchasing many forms of goods and services; unfortunately, we are unaware of how the media and society as a whole influence our decisions to purchase products. The holiday season is a prime example of how we act as marionettes to the consumerist society. What it boils down to is that you might be buying something you don't really want or need.

It all starts on "Black Friday," a sporting event to some shoppers. Many businesses offer door buster sales in order to bring in the crowds

and save money on items that would not sell as fast. Customers don't realize that they are saving money because they bought an item the store could not sell last year.

Not only that, but advertisers use many different forms of propaganda in order to influence you. Some of the more prevalent techniques used are heuristics and distractions. As defined by *Age of Propaganda* by Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, heuristics are simple cues given to solve complex problems. Heuristics include the way the item looks, how much it is, the brand name, and even the store image. Distracters make a weak message look strong. These can include sex, music, slogans, symbols, and many camera angles. Commercials and product packaging are all characteristics against you, the consumer. The idea is to rid your mind of all logical thinking and make you buy something because it's pretty and cheap. Be cautious

when purchasing gifts; take your time and don't be fooled by what the product looks like, but consider what value the product has to you.

Advertisers are making money by controlling the way a person thinks when they look at a product. They don't want you thinking centrally, also known as higher level thinking, but they want you to think peripherally, which is using emotions more than thought to decide. Be aware that propaganda is all around you in every magazine, on every television channel, and in every store. The purpose is to make you buy, but don't be forced to buy for the wrong reasons. Be conservative with your shopping. Make sure you have list of what you want to buy. Going in with an open selection is like going to the grocery store on an empty stomach. You won't buy what you need, just what looks good to you. Don't let advertising get the best of you.

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