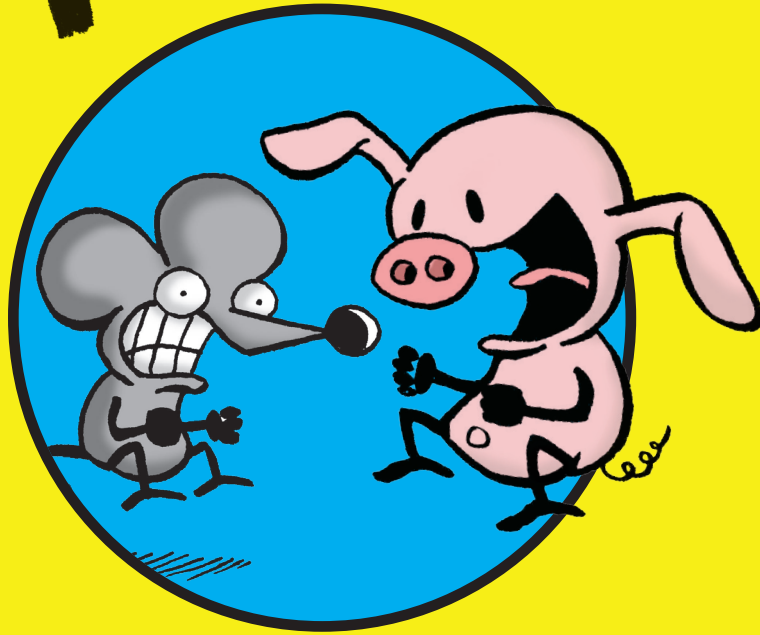


Stephan T. Pastis

BEGINNING PEARLS



Andrews McMeel
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KIDS

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Curriculum Connections and Activity/Discussion Guide

The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for grades 3–5.



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AMP! Comics for Kids

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GRADE LEVEL: 2–6

Curriculum Connections

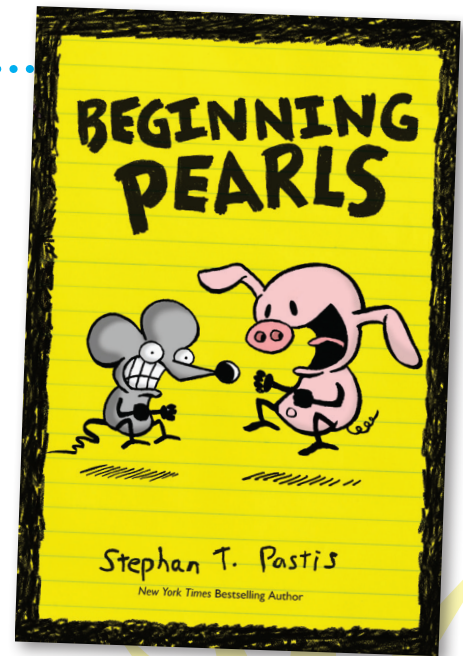
English Language Arts / Art

Thematic Connections

Friendship * Competition * Individuality * Animals * Humor

Overview

With age-appropriate dark humor, a cast of animal characters explore fun, fear, friendship and life. Heading the cast is Rat, a mean-spirited rodent who lives with the trusting and simple-minded Pig. Their supporting cast includes the highly intellectual Goat; the meek and defenseless Zebra; and the hungry and incompetent Crocs.



English Language Arts Lesson Plan: Exploring Characterization

Objective

Students will read this comic collection, participate in a class discussion, collaborate on projects within small groups and complete individual creative writing exercises prompted by the book.

Pre-reading

Vocabulary activities:

- * Ask students to keep a vocabulary notebook as they are reading the book. They should record any unfamiliar words or phrases, note their interpretation of the word from the context, and then use a dictionary to look up and record the real definition.
- * Ask students to keep a list of descriptive words as they are reading the story.

Post-reading Discussion Questions

- * Each animal character is featured in a separate section in the book. Do students feel that one of the characters is the “main” one? Why or why not?

- * Do students have a favorite character? Ask for a show of hands—is there any character that no one likes best?
- * Rat and Pig sometimes seem like friends and sometimes like enemies. Which do students believe is the “real” connection? Why is it funny that Rat is mean and Pig is not very smart?
- * Each of the characters is very distinctive. Ask students to suggest some of the ways that the artist chose to show their differences. For example, Goat is an intellectual who uses formal language and the Crocs speak and spell incorrectly. How does the artist portray Pig’s gentleness? Rat’s mean-spiritedness?
- * Why did the artist choose to begin each section with a written introduction to the character? Did this help expand students’ understanding of the animal or do they feel that just reading the comics would have been enough?

Group Activities

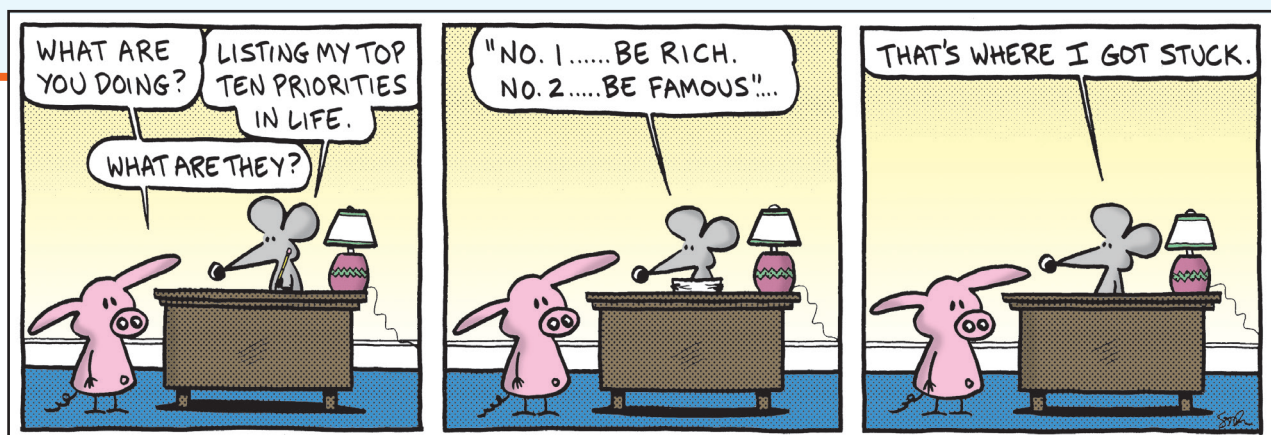
Divide the class into five groups and assign one character to each: Rat, Pig, Goat, Zebra or Crocodile.

- * Have each group come up with 5 positive character traits for their animal, and 5 negative character traits. Have the groups present their choices to the class, giving an example from the book to support at least one of their positive and negative choices.
- * Have each group choose a new, sixth animal and assign 5 positive and 5 negative character traits for him/her/them. Have them suggest to the class how this animal would fit into the existing group of stories—for example, an elephant might be scared of Rat but might want to eat Goat.

Creative Writing

Have students choose two of the following to complete.

- * Compare and contrast two of the five characters. Do you identify with one or the other?
- * Write a letter from the Zebra to the Lions trying to convince them not to eat your species.
- * Choose a story panel from the book and re-write it in each character’s voice.
- * One theme in the book is that of Rat’s job-hunting. Think of a job that Rat would be suited for, and write a “help-wanted” ad for that job.
- * On page 114, the artist suggests doing without the letter “A”. Choose a story panel from the book and try to rewrite it without using a vowel.



Other Curriculum Connections

Art

- ✱ On pages 43 and 44, Rat makes some very unfriendly gingerbread cookies. Ask students to draw their own warped story by drawing it using gingerbread men.
- ✱ On page 35, Rat gets a job writing motivational posters. Have students choose one of the characters in the book and draw a motivational poster directed at that character.
- ✱ On page 64–65, Rat shares his children’s book, and moral, with Goat. Have students draw their own 4–6 panel children’s story, complete with a Rat-type moral.

English Language Arts Standards this guide aligns with:

Grade 3:

Reading: RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.6, RL.3.7, RL.3.10

Writing: W.3.1, W.3.1a, W.3.1b, W.3.1c, W.3.1d, W.3.10

Speaking and Listening: SL.3.1, SL.3.1a, SL.3.1b, SL.3.1c, SL.3.1d, SL.3.4, SL.3.6

Language: L.3, L.3.2, L.3.2a, L.3.2g, L.3.3, L.3.3a, L.3.3b

Grade 4:

Reading: RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.6, RL.4.10

Writing: W.4.1, W.4.1a, W.4.1b, W.4.1c, W.4.1d, W.4.4, W.4.10

Speaking and Listening: SL.4.1, SL.4.1a, SL.4.1b, SL.4.1c, SL.4.1d, SL.4.4

Language: L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.2a, L.4.2d, L.4.3, L.4.3a, L.4.3b, L.4.3c, L.4.4, L.4.4a, L.4.4c, L.4.5, L.4.5c

Grade 5:

Reading: RL.5.1, RL.5.3, RL.5.4, RL.5.6, RL.5.7, RL.5.10

Writing: W.5.1, W.5.1a, W.5.1b, W.5.1c, W.5.1d, W.5.4, W.5.10

Speaking and Listening: L.5.1, SL.5.1a, SL.5.1b, SL.5.1c, SL.5.1d, SL.5.4

Language: L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.2e, L.5.3, L.5.4, L.5.4a, L.5.4c

Visit the Common Core State Standards website to read about the individual standards:

www.corestandards.org/the-standards.

