

# big NATE

MAKES THE GRADE

by LINCOLN  
PEIRCE



Andrews McMeel  
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KIDS

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

Curriculum Connections and Activity/Discussion Guide



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## **Big Nate Makes the Grade**

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AMP! Comics for Kids

Andrews McMeel Publishing

ISBN: 9781449425661

**GRADE LEVEL:** 3–7

### **Curriculum Connections**

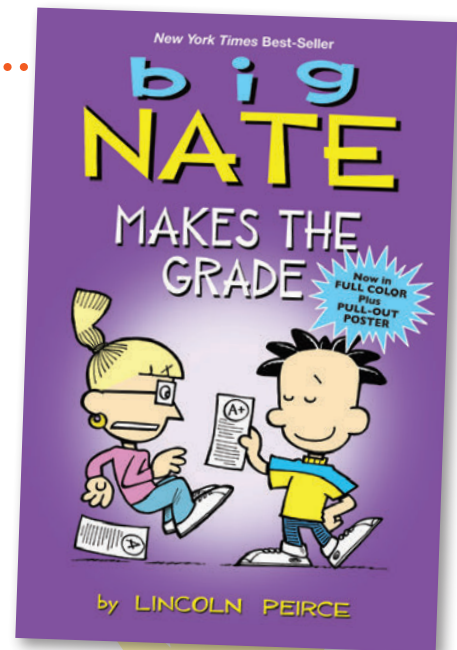
English Language Arts \* Art \* Social Studies

### **Thematic Connections**

School \* Friendship \* Bullies \* Competition

### **Overview**

Nate Wright is known to his pals and teachers for many things, including his penchant for mischief and his school record for detentions. The school life of Nate, his pals, his rivals, and his long-suffering teachers are recounted in hilarious detail and can inspire students to create their own school stories.



## **English Language Arts Lesson Plans and Discussion Questions**

### **Objective**

Students will read this cartoon book, discuss the book, extend vocabulary, and compose haiku.

### **Vocabulary Development**

1. The text of the book includes some words that may not be familiar to students. As they read the book, ask students to note any unfamiliar words, and ask them to find definitions for the unknown words and use them in sentences. Some examples: *incompetence*, *tsunami*, *forensics*, *mediocrity*, *dysfunction*, *typographical*, *deterrence*, *torpid*, *argyle*.
2. Nate and some of the other characters use expressions that may be new to students. Discuss the meaning of the following:
  - \* “Putting lipstick on a pig” (page 145)
  - \* “My hat’s in the ring” (page 35)
  - \* “Pre-emptive strike” (page 20)
  - \* “The voice of authority” (page 35)
  - \* “Reads me the riot act” (page 20)
  - \* “The battle is joined” (page 39)

## Haiku Composition

For English class, Nate and his friends have to write a haiku. Describe this poetic form to students (haiku must have 17 syllables: the first line must have 5 syllables, the second line 7, and the third line 5) and then reread the examples from the book (pages 53–58). Have students compose their own haiku: It can be a “protest” haiku like Nate’s or a haiku about school, a teacher, a friend, or something else.

## Discussion Questions

Almost all of the action in the book happens in the same place: at school. Use this to have a discussion about setting.

1. How does the school setting relate to plot, theme, and character development?
2. Do students think the plot is realistic?
3. Does Nate like school? Does Gina? Do his other friends? What do students think about school?
4. Do students understand the humor in the book’s depiction of student/teacher relationships? Have students give examples of conversations that happen in the book that would probably not happen in real life—for example, when Nate is haranguing the principal about the vending machines.



## Other Curriculum Connections

### Social Studies

One storyline in the book has Nate running for school treasurer against his nemesis Gina (pages 33–44).

- \* Have students identify and define some of the words here, such as “exit poll,” “worthy opponent,” “electoral process,” “platform,” “candidate,” and “campaign slogan.”
- \* Point out that most of the elements in any election are present here: announcing candidacy, identifying a platform, campaigning, talking to the press, meeting with voters, and polling.
- \* Do students think Nate deserved to win the election?

### Art

Use the book as a chance for students to investigate how cartoonists imply expression through lettering and drawing styles. For example:

- \* Thought bubbles (pages 69, 74)—when someone is thinking, not talking, the dialogue balloon uses “bubbles.”
- \* Jagged edges (pages 41, 64)—this shows that the person speaking is unhappy or angry.
- \* Dashed lines (pages 55, 57)—this indicates that a character is whispering.
- \* Bold type, large letters (pages 68, 199)—this shows that someone is shouting.

