TEACHER'S GUIDE

Andrews McMeel PUBLISHING® | **KIDS**

Skip School, Fly to Space

New York Times Bestselling Author
Stephan T. Pastis
A Pearls Before Swine Collection

Skip School, Fly to Space
Curriculum Connections and Activity/Discussion Guide
The activities in this guide align with the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards for grades 3–5.

Skip School, Fly to Space
Stephan T. Pastis
AMP! Comics for Kids
Andrews McMeel Publishing
ISBN: 9781449436377

GRADE LEVEL: 3–5

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
Language Arts—Characterization, Opinion Writing

CONTENT STANDARDS
Language Arts
Common Core State Standards: www.corestandards.org

OVERVIEW
Students read *Skip School, Fly to Space* and make notes about the characters in the text. Students vote for their favorite character, create a class graph showing the results, and analyze the graph. Students then use a prewriting graphic organizer to list reasons that a particular character is their favorite and examples from the text. Finally, students write opinion pieces explaining why that character is their favorite, stating clear reasons and examples to support their opinions.

Grade 3

READING

* Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1]

* Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3]

* Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7]

WRITING

* Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1]

* Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1.A]

* Provide reasons that support the opinion. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1.B]

* Use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinions and reasons. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1.C]

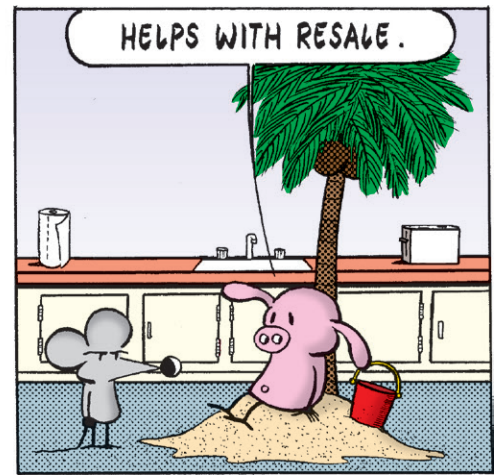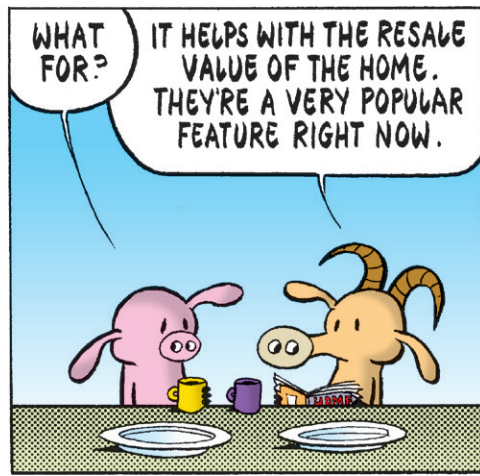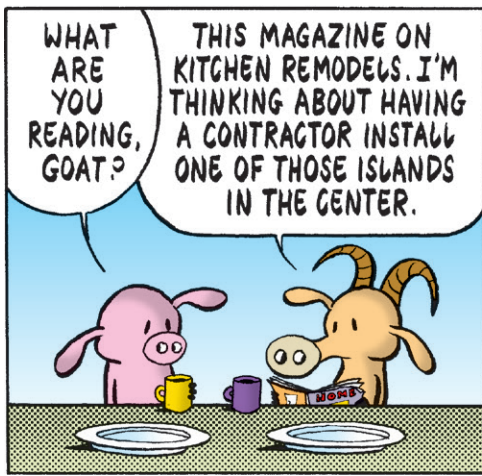* Provide a concluding statement or section. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1.D]

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

* Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1]

Grade 4

READING

* Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1]

* Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3]

WRITING

✱ Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1]

✱ Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.A]

✱ Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.B]

✱ Link opinions and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition).

✱ Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.D]

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

✱ Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1]

Grade 5

READING
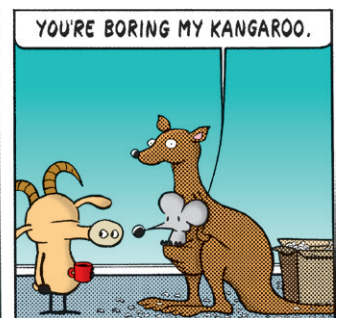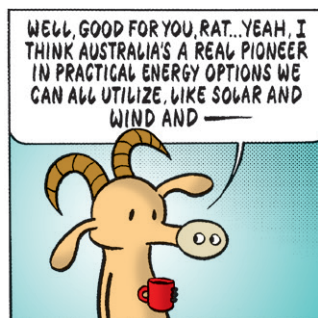
✱ Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1]

✱ Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7]
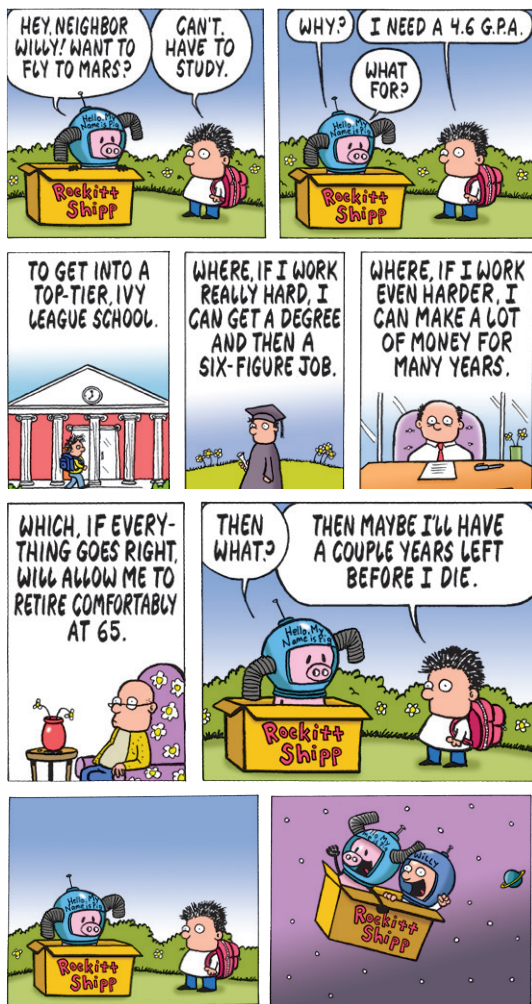
WRITING

✱ Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1]

✱ Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.A]

✱ Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.B]

✱ Link opinions and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically). [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.C]

✱ Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.D]

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

✱ Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1]

HEY, NEIGHBOR WILLY! WANT TO FLY TO MARS?

CAN'T. HAVE TO STUDY.

WHY?

WHAT FOR?

I NEED A 4.6 G.P.A.

TO GET INTO A TOP-TIER, IVY LEAGUE SCHOOL.

WHERE, IF I WORK REALLY HARD, I CAN GET A DEGREE AND THEN A SIX-FIGURE JOB.

WHERE, IF I WORK EVEN HARDER, I CAN MAKE A LOT OF MONEY FOR MANY YEARS.

WHICH, IF EVERYTHING GOES RIGHT, WILL ALLOW ME TO RETIRE COMFORTABLY AT 65.

THEN WHAT?

THEN MAYBE I'LL HAVE A COUPLE YEARS LEFT BEFORE I DIE.

Procedure

OBJECTIVES

* Students will read *Skip School, Fly to Space* and write words and phrases describing the characters, along with examples from the text that support these descriptions.

* Students will create a class graph showing their favorite characters and work in small groups to analyze the graph.

* Students will choose a favorite character and complete a prewriting graphic organizer that includes reasons why the character is their favorite and examples from the text.

* Students will write an opinion piece stating which character is their favorite and why, and support their opinion with reasons and examples from the text.

TIME FRAME

* Two class periods, plus time for students to read the book

MATERIALS

* Copies of *Skip School, Fly to Space*

* A copy of *Character Words* for each student

* Sticky notes

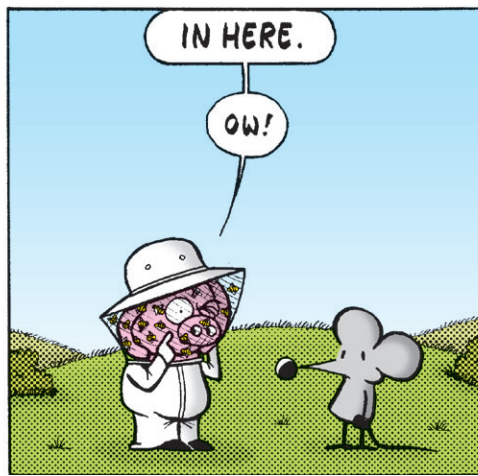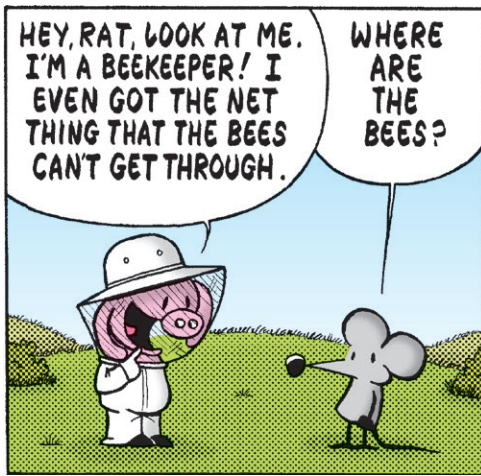* A copy of *Opinion Piece Prewriting* for each student

BEFORE READING

1. Take students on a quick book walk through *Skip School, Fly to Space* without reading the dialogue. Ask students what they think the book is about.

2. Ask students to point out who they think the main characters are in the comic, describe them, and make predictions about the characters based on visual cues. If students have read *Pearls Before Swine* comics before, have them share what they know about the characters.

3. Talk with students about **anthropomorphism**, which is the assigning of human characteristics to animals or inanimate objects. Explain that in Skip School, Fly to Space, the characters are anthropomorphic animals. Ask students to name some anthropomorphized characters in books, movies, or plays that they know, such as the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz* or Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*. Make a list on the board or chart paper of some human characteristics that writers often assign to animals, such as talking, walking upright, wearing clothes, etc.

Point out to students that in addition to actions, anthropomorphism can include giving animals human emotions. For example, the Cowardly Lion is often afraid, and Wilbur is sad when Charlotte dies.

DURING READING

4. Give each student a copy of *Character Words* and tell students that as they read *Skip School, Fly to Space*, they should pay attention to the characters and how they display human characteristics, then write down words or phrases that describe each character and examples from the text that show these characteristics. These can be physical characteristics (Zebra drinks from a mug; Goat reads a newspaper), emotions or feelings (Croc is afraid of Google; Zebra is annoyed with the crocs), or aspects of their personalities (Pig is eager but naïve; Rat is overconfident and mean to Pig). Remind students that in comics, information comes from the words as well as the pictures (and the way they work together), so they should pay attention to the drawings, as well as the dialogue.

4

HEY, RAT, LOOK AT ME. I'M A BEEKEEPER! I EVEN GOT THE NET THING THAT THE BEES CAN'T GET THROUGH.

WHERE ARE THE BEES?

IN HERE.

OW!

YOU'D THINK THERE'D BE A BETTER WAY.

AFTER READING

5. Draw a graph on a whiteboard or chart paper, title it "Who is your favorite character?" and write the names of characters along one axis (the graph can be vertical or horizontal depending on how much space you have available). Have each student place a sticky note in the row or column for his or her favorite character. (Note: The names of the characters appear on the Character Words worksheet.)

**6.** Analyze the completed graph with the students. Ask students:

* Was there a clear favorite character for the class?
* Which character was the least favorite?
* Why do you think that is?

Divide students into pairs or triads and have each group write a one-paragraph analysis of the class graph explaining the data and their opinion about the results.

HOLY SMOKE! ZEEBA NEIGHBA! IS TOOTH FAIRY! OPEN DOOR! GET MONIES!

7. Tell students that they will now write an opinion piece stating which character is their favorite and why. Give each student a copy of *Opinion Piece Prewriting* and explain that they are to list the reasons that their chosen character is their favorite, then list examples from the text. Tell students to use their notes from the *Character Words* worksheet as a starting point

WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER?

Pig Rat Goat Zebra Larry Croc Junior Croc Mom Croc
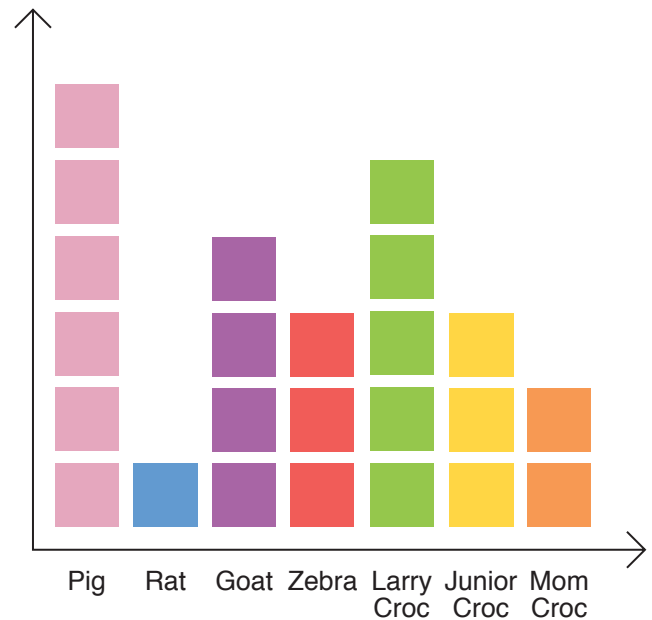
and encourage them to go back to the text and find more examples. Share the *Opinion Piece Prewriting* sample with students if you like.

8. Once students have completed their prewriting organizers, have them write their opinion pieces. Remind students to include all the parts of an opinion piece in their writing:

* Introduce the topic and state your opinion.
* List the reasons for your opinion and examples or evidence for each reason.
* Use linking words between your reasons and examples (because, therefore, since, for example, for instance, in addition).
* Write a strong conclusion that restates your opinion.

If you use the opinion-writing rubric to assess student work, share it with students at this time so that they will know what is expected of them.

5

Assessment

OPINION-WRITING RUBRIC:

	3	2	1
INTRODUCTION	States opinion clearly and in an interesting way	States opinion	Does not state opinion
REASONS	Includes three or more reasons for the opinion	Includes one or two reasons for the opinion	Includes no reason for the opinion
EXAMPLES FROM TEXT	Includes two or more examples for each reason	Includes one example for each reason	Does not include examples
LINKING WORDS	Linking words are used correctly and are interesting	Linking words are used correctly	Linking words are used incorrectly or are not used
CLOSING	Closing is interesting and restates opinion	Closing restates opinion	Closing does not restate opinion or is not present
CLEAN COPY	Few to no mechanical or grammatical errors	Some mechanical or grammatical errors	Many mechanical or grammatical errors

PREWRITING SAMPLE:

Favorite Character: Bob the Croc		
REASON: I think it's funny when he does dumb things.	**REASON:** The way he talks makes me laugh.	**REASON:** He thinks he's really tough, but he's not.
EXAMPLES FROM TEXT: ∗ He is the super-hero Paper Jam Boy. ∗ He tries to catch the zebra with ridiculous schemes. ∗ He does whatever the other crocs tell him.	**EXAMPLES FROM TEXT:** ∗ He talks like Cookie Monster from Sesame Street. ∗ He says "ees" instead of "is." ∗ He leaves out words.	**EXAMPLES FROM TEXT:** ∗ He writes a threatening note on Dora the Explorer stationery. ∗ He's afraid of Google.

TRANSLATE THE CROCS

In the *Pearls Before Swine* comic strips, the crocodiles speak in a special form of broken English, with improper grammar. Have students "translate" the speech of the crocodiles into formal English.


"*We got the President of the United States to take the side of the crocodiles. Now he is giving a speech and will order bad things for your sad zebra face!*"


"*He is a big, important man. The whole country likes him. He gives good speeches. He is from some place called Illinois.*"

THAT'S PUNNY

Much of the humor in *Pearls Before Swine* comes from Pig misunderstanding the meaning of a word. For example, on page 104, Pig mixes up the words poplar and popular; on page 109, he misunderstands the meaning of ratify; and on page 208, he confuses stationery and stationary.
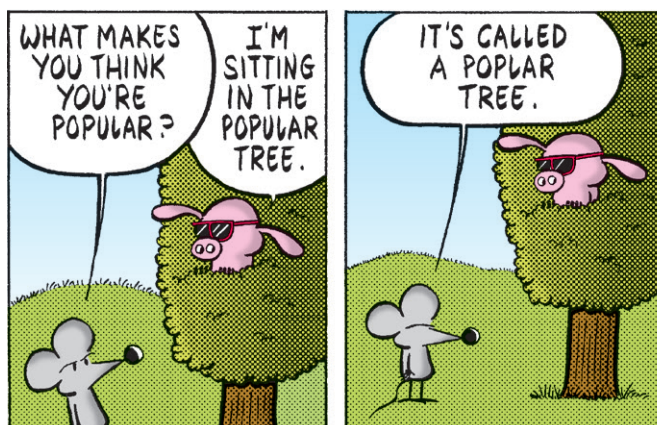
Have students make note of as many of these word-play jokes as they can find in *Skip School, Fly to Space* and create a list of the words that have been misunderstood or misinterpreted. Have students brainstorm other words that might be misconstrued. Then, challenge students to create their own comic in which the humor revolves around a misunderstood word or words.
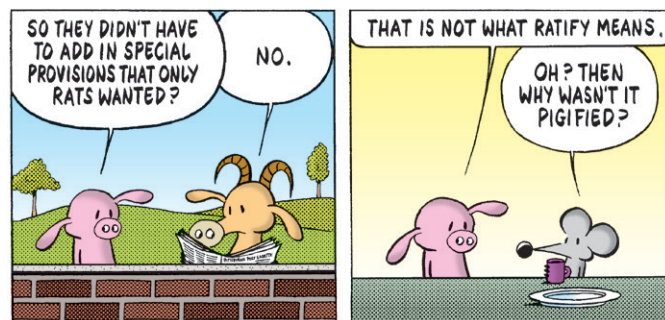
CHARACTER WORDS

Directions: As you read the book, write down words or phrases that describe each character. Then, write some examples from the book that show these characteristics.

Character	Words Describing the Character	Examples from the Text
PIG		
RAT		
GOAT		
ZEBRA		
LARRY, BOB, & FRED (CROCS)		
JUNIOR CROC		
MOM CROC		

OPINION PIECE PREWRITING

Directions: Write the name of your favorite character. List three reasons why that character is your favorite, then list some examples from the text that illustrate each reason.

Favorite Character:		
REASON:	**REASON:**	**REASON:**
EXAMPLES FROM TEXT:	**EXAMPLES FROM TEXT:**	**EXAMPLES FROM TEXT:**