

Grade K Unit 1: Book Title: The Best Way to Play by Bill Cosby

Synopsis:

Little Bill and his friends *love* the TV show "Space Explorers." And so when the new Space Explorers video game comes out, they each want a copy. But when Little Bill asks his parents to buy him the game, they say no.

So Little Bill and his friends go to their friend Andrew's house to play the game. What they discover, though, is that the video game isn't nearly as much fun nor as challenging as what their imaginations can dream up!

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

Drawing conclusions, Creativity, Friendships, Imagination

Key words and Vocabulary activities:

Imagination

Planet

Challenging

Friends

Using a hangman diagram and the key words above, have the student guess the word and then discuss what it means!

Pre Reading Questions:

Based on the picture on the cover of the book, what do you think the book The Best Way to Play is about?

What's more fun, playing video games or making up your own game? Why?

Read Story:

Discussion Prompts:

What's your favorite thing about playing pretend?

Little Bill and his friends think they can't be real Space Explorers without the video game.

Do you think that's true? Do you ever get bored watching TV or playing video games? What other things do you like to do?

Tell me about a time when you really wanted your parents to buy you something– what was it and why did you want it?

What did Little Bill discover about playing outside?

What lesson did Little Bill and his friends learn?

Extension Activities:

Based on your favorite parts of this book, create a new book cover. What would you include on the cover?

What happens next to Little Bill? Write down your ideas for another chapter!

Pick your favorite chapter of this book and turn it into a play:

- imagine what would happen there! Can you act it out for your parents or your teacher?

Grade K Unit 1 Junie B and the Stupid Smelly Bus by Barbara Park

Synopsis:

Remember when it was scary to go to school? 'Cause it was your first day and you didn't know anything. Meet Junie B. Jones, kindergartner. She's so scared of the school bus and the meanies on it that when it's time to go home, she doesn't.

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Changes and New Experiences
- Confronting and Resolving Fears
- Elementary School
- Back to School

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities:

Roam

Screechy

Interrupt

Pushy

Smelly

Have your parents/teacher help you to make a wheel with a spinner that includes the following phrases:

Act it Out!

Spell it!

Draw it!

Use it in a Sentence!

Using each of the vocabulary words, spin the wheel and see where it lands!

Pre Reading Questions:

Can you guess what the book is about by looking at the front cover of the book? What do you think it is about?

Do you remember how you felt on your first day of kindergarten?

How did you feel once you got home on the first day of school?

Read Book:

Discussion Questions:

How does Junie B. feel about riding the bus?

If you were Junie B. what would you have said to help your parents understand why you didn't like riding the bus?

What does Junie B's mother call her when she is in trouble? What does your mom call you when you are in trouble?

Describe how Junie B. made her shoes shiny.

Extension Activities:

Draw a picture of the kindergarten classroom where Junie B. goes to school!

What was the funniest part of this book? Act out the scene for your parents or friends!

Find the word that shows how Mother felt when Junie B. was yelling about where the bus was going.

Draw what this expression or feeling looks like on a face.

Grade 1 Unit 1 Book Title: The Magic School Bus Hops Home

Synopsis:

Oh, no! Wanda's best friend, Bella the bullfrog, is missing. The class wants to help look for her. Ms. Frizzle says, "The best way to find a frog is to be a frog!" So, the kids take a ride on the Magic School Bus. Join them as they shrink to frog size and learn all about animal habitats!

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

Animals, Biology and Life Science, Creativity, Oceans, Lakes and Rivers

Key words and Vocabulary activities:

Shrink

Habitat

Shelter

Predator

Make a bull frog's ideal habitat using the vocabulary words above. For example, write out the word "habitat" and draw what should be included within the word.

Pre Reading Questions:

Based on the picture on the cover of the book, what do you think the book The Magic School Bus Hops Home is about?

Read Story:

Discussion Prompts:

Would you like to live in Bella's environment? Why or why not?

What are the differences between Bella's environment and your environment?

How did you feel when Bella went back to her environment?

Extension Activities:

Since bull frogs are hard to find, go outside and dig until you find an earthworm. How long did it take to find the worm?

Observe the worm's actions for a few minutes. What did it do while you were watching it?

Put some dry cereal near the worm. Watch what happens next! Write it down and share it with a friend.

Watch the video of this book! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsZMRSQEUvI>

How was the video different from what you pictured when you read the book?

Unit 1 Grade 1 Mutt Dog by Stephen Michael King

Synopsis:

Mutt Dog is a stray. He wanders the city trying to find food and a safe place to sleep. One day he follows a lady who also lives on the street to a halfway house. A woman who works there gives him some food and a comfy box for a bed. But in the morning she says he has to go back on the streets. But does he? The lady who works in the halfway house takes him home and finally he has a place where he belongs.

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

Animals, Character and Values

Key words and Vocabulary activities:

Stray

Belong

Mutt

Hunger

Cozy

Play Pictionary using the key words listed above!! Draw the word and have your friends and family guess what it is!

Pre Reading Questions:

Have you ever seen a stray dog and wondered who takes care of them?

Based on the picture on the cover of the book, what do you think the book is about?

Read Story:

Discussion Prompts:

Life on the streets of the city is hard for Mutt Dog. Talk about what he eats and where he sleeps. Is it a dangerous life? Does anyone take any notice of him?

All through the story there are people who, like Mutt Dog, have nowhere to go. Talk about what they are doing in the pictures. Why do they need the halfway house? What does it give them? Do you think that they might have good qualities like Mutt Dog has?

When the lady from the halfway house takes Mutt Dog home, how is his life different?

Extension Activities:

Do you have a pet? How did you and your family decide on his/her name? If your pet was already part of the family before you were born, ask your parents how your pet was chosen! (if you don't have a pet, ask someone who has one—a family member, a friend or neighbor would be a great source!)

Draw a picture of story of how your pet (or your friend's pet) was chosen.

Mutt Dog's life is changed because of one kind lady. She could have ignored him like everyone else did, but she didn't. Do you think it is important that people are kind to animals and to each other? Can doing little things make a big difference in other people's and animals' lives? What does the lady get in return for being kind to Mutt Dog? Describe something little that someone has done for you that makes you happier.

What can you do for someone that can make them happier?

Unit 1 Grade 2 The Cactus Hotel by Brenda Guiberson

Synopsis:

It is another hot day in the desert. Birds and other animals scurry about looking for food. When they get tired they stop to rest at a giant cactus. It is their hotel in the desert! Many different animals live in the cactus hotel. It protects them; and they protect it, by eating the pests that could harm the cactus. The cactus grows larger and larger and will live for about two hundred years. When one animal moves out, another moves in. There is never a vacancy in the cactus hotel!

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Biology and Life Science
- Habitats and Ecosystems
- Plants and Flowers

Key words and Vocabulary activities:

Scurry

Vacancy

Pests

Ecosystem

Hotel

Play hangman using the key words listed above– see if you can stump your friends!

Pre Reading Questions:

Based on the picture on the cover of the book, what do you think the book is about?

How do you think animals survive in the desert?

Read Story:

Discussion Prompts:

The book is called Cactus Hotel. Do you know what a hotel is?

Why do we need hotels when we are traveling?

What kinds of animals stayed in the hotel?

Why is it important to protect unique environments?

Extension Activities:

How would you tell the story from the cactus' point of view?

Go to Google Maps and try to find the Saguaro National Monument. How far is it from your house?

<https://www.google.com/maps>

Draw your life cycle– include when you were born, when you learned to walk, when you went to school, how big you are now and what you can do!

Unit 1 Grade 2 Facing West a Story of the Oregon Trail by Kathleen Kudlinski

Synopsis

The year is 1845, when eleven-year-old Ben finds out that he and his family are going to make the long and difficult trip from Missouri to the Oregon Territory. Unfortunately, he believes it his fault — his doctor says that the air in the West would be better for his severe asthma. Wracked with guilt, he also blames himself for the hardships his family will have to endure along the way, including bears, snakes, and hunger. On the expedition, a man named Pete becomes Ben's mentor, helping him understand that everyone has fears. Most importantly, Pete gives Ben the strength and courage he needs to live with and accept his asthma.

Big Ideas and Key Understanding

- Westward Exploration and Expansion
- Courage, Bravery, Heroism
- Honor

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities

Asthma

Guilt

Hardship

Expedition

Mentor

Courage

Pioneer

Have your parents/teacher help you to make a wheel with a spinner that includes the following phrases:

Act it Out!

Spell it!

Draw it!

Use it in a Sentence!

Using each of the vocabulary words, spin the wheel and see where it lands!

Pre- Reading Questions:

How much do you know about pioneers who went Westward?

Why do you think they took their chance to go so far away from home?

How would you feel if your family told you you were moving thousands of miles away?

Read Story:

Discussion Prompts:

Where is Ben's family headed? Why?

What 5 things were crowding Ben's mind so much that he couldn't write?

Explain what Ben meant when he compared asthma to mud.

What do the pioneers need so desperately?

What did Mama do that surprised everyone?

Extension Activities:

Using a map of the United States and colored pencils, follow the trail that Ben's family took to Oregon. Make a key showing where the trip started and ended and any other important happenings along the way. A free download is listed below:

<http://www.freeworldmaps.net/download/united-states.html>

Ben's job on the trail is to keep a journal of the daily events. Pretend that you are Ben and write a journal/diary entry for your favorite chapter!

Grade 3 Unit 1 Armadilly Chili by Helen Ketterman

Synopsis:

A blue northern's a-blowin', and Miss Billie Armadilly is hankering to make a pot of chili! Only she needs to fix it all by herself because Tex the tarantula, Mackie the mockingbird, and Taffy the horned toad are too busy to lend a hand. Well, she'll eat it all by herself, too! But then the smell of chili cooking in the cold night brings her friends one by one, back to Miss Billie's door. What's a lady armadillo to do?

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Cooking
- Animals
- Sharing and Taking Turns
- Sharing
- Understanding Self and Others

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities:

Armadillo

Mockingbird

Tarantula

Swooped

Scurried

Play hangman using the key words listed above– see if you can stump your friends!

Write another chapter for Armadilly Chili using the vocabulary words!

Read book:

Discussion Questions:

Does this book remind you of another story? If you said Little Red Hen, how is it similar?

Do you think Miss Billie was right not to share her chili?

Why did Miss Billie's chili taste "flat"?

What was her chili missing?

Extension Activities:

Listen to the book read on the following website:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OOMOKVfSv8>

How was it different than when you read it yourself? Did you learn something new?

What would have happened if Miss Billie didn't invite her friends in to share her chili? Write a new ending to the book.

Ask your parents if you can help make chili for dinner. See if it tastes better than regular chili! A recipe is listed below:

<http://allrecipes.com/recipe/chili-joes-for-kids/>

Grade 3 Unit 1 The BoxCar Children Gertrude Chandler Warner

Synopsis:

Four resourceful, independent orphans find inventive ways to stick together through all kinds of exciting mysteries and adventures, including living in a boxcar!

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Cooperation and Teamwork
- Courage, Bravery, Heroism
- Honor
- Resourcefulness
- Siblings
- Survival

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities:

Chores

Stray

Identity

Content

Make a wheel with a spinner that includes the following phrases:

Act it Out!

Spell it!

Draw it!

Use it in a Sentence!

Using each of the vocabulary words, spin the wheel and see where it lands!

Pre-Reading Questions:

What is a boxcar?

Based on the title of the book, what do you think this book is about?

Read Book:

Discussion Questions:

- What are Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny running away from?
Where do they end up?
What have you run away from that was actually good for you?
How did you find out that it was good for you?
- What are some ways that Henry and Jessie made do with what they had?
What are some ways that you have learned to be content with what you have?
- How do the children's attitude make a difference in their adventure?
What would have happened if they had grumbled and complained the whole time?
If they had bad attitudes, how much would the children have loved the boxcar they were in?
- What makes Henry work so hard and well for Dr. Moore and Mrs. Moore?
What does his hard work bring him?

Tell about a time when you were a good worker.
What was the result of your hard work?

Extension Activities:

Watch the movie, coming out August 2014 The BoxCar Children. How does it compare to the book?

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3246908/>

Draw a picture of the boxcar, if it were your boxcar, what would you include inside of it?

Grade 4 Unit 1 The Maze of Bones (39 Clues Series)

Synopsis:

When Old Grace Cahill kicks the bucket, her will reveals the first in a series of secrets that will take her heirs on an adventure around the world. Key among them are Amy and Dan Cahill, a brother and sister team determined to discover Grace's secrets. With the help of their glitter eye shadow-wearing, nose-ring-rocking au pair, Nellie, the three of them travel to Philadelphia and Paris on the trail of that guy on the front of the \$100 bill: [Benjamin Franklin](#).

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

Family

Exploration

Loyalty

Good vs. Evil

Key Words and Vocabulary activities:

Intricate

Catacombs

Mozart

Au Pair

Mourners

Armonica

Orb

Draw a picture of the Cahills in a scene from the book using 4 of the vocabulary words listed above.

Pre-Reading Questions:

What's up with the Title? Where do you think the Cahills will be led in this book?

Read book:

Discussion Questions:

1. What are Amy and Dan's individual strengths and weaknesses? How do they complement each other as a team?
2. How do Amy and Dan change and grow over the course of the story?
3. Why does Rick Riordan show other teams' perspectives instead of just focusing on Amy and Dan? Do those perspectives add anything?
4. Why did Grace keep the competition a secret from Amy and Dan?

Extension Activities:

Go on the websites listed below and see how many questions you get right!

<http://www.shmoop.com/maze-of-bones/quotes-quiz.html>

<http://www.shmoop.com/maze-of-bones/symbols-quiz.html>

Write an alternative ending to this book!

Grade 4 Unit 1 Because of Mr. Terupt by Rob Buyea

Synopsis

It is the beginning of fifth grade, and Mr. Terupt is a brand new teacher. He has his hands full with seven distinctive voices in his class: Jessica is the smart, new girl who isn't quite fitting in. Luke is the brain. Anna has a home life she's embarrassed about and just wants to disappear. Peter is the class clown, who can't seem to sit down and focus. Lexie is a bully who feels that the best defense is a good offense. Jeffery just hates school, and nobody really knows why. Overweight Danielle can't ever seem to stand up for herself. Only Mr. Terupt seems able to reach his students, and things are beginning to look up for each of them until a fateful winter day where an accident occurs that will change everything and everyone.

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

Bullying

Moving and Relocation

Value of Family

Self-Confidence

Infidelity

Forgiveness

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities:

Betrayed

Ostracized

Shunned

Genuine

Thrive

Intervene

Malicious

Make a wheel with a spinner that includes the following phrases:

Act it Out!

Spell it!

Draw it!

Use it in a Sentence!

Using each of the vocabulary words, spin the wheel and see where it lands!

Pre-Reading Questions:

How would you describe an exceptional teacher?

What kind of effect do they have on their students?

Have you ever been in a class where the teacher didn't seem to care about their students? If so, what was the effect on the class?

Read the book:

Discussion Questions:

- Alexia says "It's always easier for me to lie when I don't have to look at the person's eyes." **Why do you think Alexia feels like she needs to lie? Do you ever feel like lying would help you make friends?**

- Danielle deals a lot with Alexia bullying her about her weight. Danielle's mom tells her that "It's making you a better person and someday this experience will help you." **Do you agree with Danielle's mom?**
- Mr. Terupt says "I've watch Alexia be unpleasant to all of you. I hoped that one of you was going to stand up to her and tell her to stop. You didn't...If you let people get away with being mean, they're going to keep being mean... You should stand by each other. That's what being friends is all about." **Do you think that Mr. Terupt was right? How do you handle bullies?**

Extension Activities:

Imagine Mr. Terupt is your teacher. How would he handle the kids in your class?

Watch the following video preview of the sequel to Because of Mr Terupt; what are your predictions for Mr. Terupt Falls Again?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9G9w--5RZw>

Create a comic strip based on the book Because of Mr. Terupt !

Create a one-act play based on your favorite chapter of the book.

Grade 5 Unit 1: Book Title: Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli

Synopsis:

He wasn't born with the name Maniac Magee. He came into this world named Jeffrey Lionel Magee, but when his parents died and his life changed, so did his name. And Maniac Magee became a legend. Even today kids talk about how fast he could run; about how he hit an inside-the-park "frog" homer; how no knot, no matter how snarled, would stay that way once he began to untie it. But the thing Mania Magee is best known for is what he did for the kids from the East Side and those from the West Side.

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

Family Life

Prejudice

Tolerance

Individuality

Key words and Vocabulary activities: Using the vocabulary words below, create a 2 paragraph addition to any chapter in Maniac Magee:

Chaotic

Finicky

Flinched

Grungy

Ludicrous

Stupefied

Urchin

Pre Reading Questions:

Based on the picture on the cover of the book, what do you think the book Maniac Magee is about?

What do you think a character with the name of “Maniac Magee” would be like in real life?

What does it mean to be a “maniac?”

What does the word “home” mean to you? How does it differ from the word “house”?

Read Story:

Discussion Prompts:

How would you feel if you didn't have a home?

On Thanksgiving Day Maniac says grace. What is he thankful for? Were you surprised by what he said? What are you grateful for?

Maniac Magee asks Grayson lots and lots of questions. What kinds of questions would you ask Maniac Magee?

What is Maniac Magee's most powerful memory? What is yours? Why?

Extension Activities:

Based on your favorite parts of this book, design a new book cover. What would you include on the cover?

Write a sequel to the book with Maniac Magee turning 13 years old. What is he up to?

Pick your favorite chapter of this book and turn it into a play:

- Write the scene– imagine what would happen there, make sure you include a conflict that builds suspense and excitement.

Unit 1 Grade 6 Old Yeller by Fred Gibson

Synopsis:

At first, Travis couldn't stand the sight of Old Yeller. The stray dog was ugly, and a thieving rascal, too. But he sure was clever, and a smart dog could be a big help on the wild Texas frontier, especially with Papa away on a long cattle drive up to Abilene.

Strong and courageous, Old Yeller proved that he could protect Travis's family from any sort of danger. But can Travis do the same for Old Yeller?

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Courage, Bravery, Heroism
- Farm and Ranch Life
- Loyalty

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities:

Aggravated

Astride

Binding

Carcass

Careen

Commotion

Dingy

Check out this online Old Yeller vocabulary game!

<http://www.vocabulary.co.il/context-and-definitions/middle-school/old-yeller-context-match/>

Pre Reading Questions:

Based on the cover of the book, can you predict what Old Yeller is about?

Read Book:

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does Travis prove himself to be “man of the house” while his father is away?
2. Does Travis mature in any ways? How?
3. How did Old Yeller win the respect of Travis?
4. How did Old Yeller save the lives of everyone on the farm?
5. Why is Papa proud of Travis?

Extension Activities:

Watch the movie Old Yeller. How is it different from the book? What did you enjoy more, the movie or the book?

Write another chapter in Old Yeller. Does the new puppy, sired by Old Yeller, have the same character qualities as his father?

Grade 6 Unit 1 Surviving the Applewhites by Stephanie Tolan

Synopsis:

Word is Jack Semple was kicked out of every school in his home state. Now, the only place that will take him is the Creative Academy, a home school run by a chaotic, quarrelsome family named Applewhite. When Jake meets E.D. Applewhite, a scruffy girl longing for order, the only thing they have in common is the determination to survive the family's eccentricities. Jake thinks this will be a breeze. But is he really as tough or as bad as he seems?

Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Drama, Theater, Musicals
- Manners and Conduct
- Pride and Self-Esteem
- Friends and Friendship
- School Life

Key Words and Vocabulary Activities:

Scarlet

Haphazard

Indispensable

Zany

Juvenile

Delinquent

Artistic

Create a comic strip using the vocabulary words listed above!

Using flash cards, define each word and then use it in a sentence. See how many you get right the first time around!

Pre- Reading Questions:

What is an example of living an eccentric life?

Maybe your own family is eccentric? If so how are they eccentric?

Have you ever stayed with an eccentric family? How did you feel? Did you change the way you thought about the way you do things based on that experience?

Read Book:

Discussion Questions:

What is the "Creative Academy" and how does Jake Semple end up going there?

List all the members of the Applewhite family and explain what each of their talents or jobs is.

What is involved in E.D.'s Butterfly Project? What does she need to do to complete it?

Why does E.D. think she is different than the other Applewhites? What are they like? What is she like?

Why doesn't Jake run away from the Applewhites and Wits End? What would happen to him if he did?

Extension Activities:

Design an advertisement for the Applewhite's production of "The Sound of Music". Include the name of the production, cast members and where it will take place!

What project would you be working on if you were at the Creative Academy?

Draw a map of the Applewhite family property. Use colored pencils to color-code the buildings. Include a title as well as a key or legend.