

BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: K–3

Ages: 4+

Lexile Measure®: 58L

Pages: 32

Guided Reading Level: K

Genre: Picture Book

Subject/Theme: Bullies, Humor, Insects

Common Core State Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade K	RL.K.1, RL.K.2, RL.K.4, RL.K.7	W.K.3	SL.K.1, SL.K.2, SL.K.5	L.K.4, L.K.5
Grade 1	RL.1.1, RL.1.2, RL.1.4, RL.1.7	W.1.3	SL.1.1, SL.1.2, SL.1.5	L.1.4, L.1.5
Grade 2	RL.2.1, RL.2.2, RL.2.4, RL.2.7	W.2.3	SL.2.1, SL.2.2, SL.2.5	L.2.4, L.2.5
Grade 3	RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.4, RL.3.7	W.3.3	SL.3.1, SL.3.2, SL.3.5	L.8.4, L.8.5

Teaching the Book

Bullies of the world, beware! That’s the message of this imaginative and clever fantasy story about a bullied boy and the ants who teach him a lesson. John Nickle’s story provides the opportunity to model how to do a close reading to determine the theme of the book and how to choose strong and precise words. Activities engage students in generating questions and finding answers about real ants, performing a dramatic reading of the book, and creating a “Stop the Bully” poster.

Theme Focus: Bullies

Comprehension Focus: Determining Theme

Language Focus: Strong and Precise Words

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Nickle has illustrated several acclaimed children’s books including *Alphabet Explosion*, *Who Pushed Humpty Dumpty*, and *Hans My Hedgehog*. *The Ant Bully* was released as a major motion picture by Warner Bros. and Playtone in 2006. Nickle’s editorial illustrations have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

John Nickle says he has faced many bullies in his lifetime, and writing and illustrating *The Ant Bully* gave him a way to finally get even. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.

OVERVIEW

Book Summary

It all begins when Sid, the neighborhood bully, sprays a hose at Lucas, who wears funny glasses and a strange hat and is a bit weird. Unable to strike back, Lucas instead attacks the ants in his yard with his squirt gun. Even ants don’t like to be bullied, and they angrily stuff Lucas into their ant hole and take him before their Queen. She commands the Ant Wizard to shrink Lucas and puts him on trial. Lucas, now not much bigger than an ant himself, is declared guilty and sentenced to hard labor.

At last, the Queen agrees to free Lucas if he can bring her a Swell Jell from his home. Lucas almost succeeds until his father comes after him and his ant companions with a fly swatter. Lucas saves the ants’ lives and is rewarded by the Queen with his freedom and his normal size. The story ends with justice being served on Sid the bully!

Get Ready to Read

Pre-Reading Activities

Stop the Bully Introduce *The Ant Bully* by talking with students about bullies. First, share with them several video activities about bullying from the McGruff website. McGruff is a crime-fighting dog developed by the Department of Justice to teach students to create better communities by fighting crime—and bullying. Share activities with students to help them make choices about bullying in school situations by visiting the McGruff website at <http://bit.ly/VIKXJm>. After playing the games, discuss with students what they learned about dealing with bullies.

Preview and Predict Project the book cover on a whiteboard or screen. Ask students to read the title of the book and then the name of the author and illustrator. Ask them to study the cover illustration. What is happening in the picture? Why might the boy be using a squirt gun on the ants?

Vocabulary

Strong and Precise Words Ask students to watch for the vocabulary words as they read. How do these words describe things in a very strong and precise way? Have them use clues in the pictures and the text to figure out what the words mean.

Use **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students.

stunned (p. 12)	thundered (p. 13)
defending (p. 16)	pleaded (p. 21)
flashed (p. 25)	booming (p. 25)
bellowed (p. 25)	trickled (p. 30)

STORIA ENRICHMENTS

To assess and enhance students' comprehension, this Storia e-book contains a Reading Challenge Quiz.



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Ask students to think about this question as they read. Write the question on chart paper or the whiteboard.

Do you think Lucas will ever be a bully again? Why or why not?



As You Read

Reading the Book

Read-Aloud Read the book aloud with fluency and expression. If possible, project the book on a whiteboard or screen. Ask students to look carefully at the illustrations as they listen, connecting what they hear in the story to what they see in the pictures.

Shared Reading Reread the book and ask students to read their copies at the same time. Cue them to read aloud certain words and phrases that you omit from your reading. If students are able, encourage them to read the text aloud with you.

Comprehension Focus

Determine Theme Help students learn how to use evidence in the text and illustrations to determine the theme of the book. Remind students that a theme is the message that an author wants to get across to readers. Project pages 4–5 on the whiteboard or screen and model for students how to do a close reading of the text and illustrations to determine the theme about bullying. Begin by rereading the text on page 4.

Model: The text tells me that some kids thought Lucas was weird, but Sid the bully was especially mean to him. Look at the picture of Sid . . . he looks just as mean as his dog! And Lucas is scared! I can tell he is scared from the look on his face. I think the author is showing us that bullying is a really ugly and mean thing to do.

Continue to discuss how the text and illustrations develop the theme by using the questions on **Resource #2: Determine Theme** while projecting the pages on the screen. Prompt students to think deeply about the author’s message to readers. After answering all the questions, ask students to write or discuss the theme of the book.

After You Read

Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

1. Bullies What do you think McGruff the crime-fighting dog would say to Lucas at the beginning of the book? What advice would he give him? (*Sample answers: Stop. Talk. Walk. He would tell Lucas to respect himself and not bully the ants.*)

2. Determine Theme What lesson do you think the ants taught Lucas about bullying? (*Sample answers: They taught him that bullying only creates bad feelings and more hurt. When Lucas helps them, they reward him with friendship and freedom.*)

3. Strong and Precise Words Look at the picture of Sid the bully on the last page. Use one of the vo-

cabulary words to describe how he feels or what he says. (*Sample answer: Sid the bully felt stunned to be so teeny. “Put me down!” Sid bellowed.*)

Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

1. Text-to-Self What do you think Lucas should do with the tiny version of Sid the bully?

2. Text-to-World What kinds of help do people in your school or community give you to deal with bullies?

3. Text-to-Text Compare the illustrations in this book with illustrations in other picture books. Do you like or dislike these illustrations? Why?

WORDS TO KNOW

Strong and Precise Words

Explain that the author chooses verbs and other words to describe things in a strong and precise way. Model the example of **thundered** on page 13: “GUILTY!” thundered the judge.” Explain that the word thundered tells us that the judge spoke in a loud and scary voice. Then read aloud the following quotations from the book to students. Help them define the words and understand why they are strong and precise choices.

1. Lucas was too **stunned** to respond. (p. 12)
2. **Defending** the colony against wasps . . . (p. 16)
3. “But I will need help,” Lucas **pleaded**. (p. 21)
4. . . bright lights flashed and a **booming** voice filled the room. (p. 25)
5. “ANNNNTS!” Lucas’s father **bellowed**. (p. 25)
6. The wizard **trickled** potion drops into Lucas’s ear until he slowly fell asleep. (p. 30)

Extension Activities

Reading/Writing Connection

A Shrinking Fantasy Being shrunk is a popular plot device in fantasy books and movies. Students can have fun with the idea by creating a fantasy story modeled after *The Ant Bully*. Depending on students' abilities, you may want to have them work with partners or create the story through a mixture of recitation and writing. Get their imaginations started with the following writing prompt: You have been shrunk to the size of an ant! What happens when . . . ? Provide students with possible options: What happens when your cat comes in your room?

Content Area Connections

Literature Two Bully Books *The Ant Bully* presents a good opportunity for students to read two books on the same topic. For younger readers, you might choose *Noodles: I Hate Bullies!* by Hans Wilhelm. For older readers, consider reading *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill. Both books stay closer to reality than *The Ant Bully* and provide students experience with comparing realistic fiction and fantasy, as well as, comparing how different characters respond to bullying.

Music/Math The Ants Go Marching One by One Students will have fun learning the words to the traditional song, "The Ants Go Marching One by One . . ." Locate full lyrics at the Bus Songs website, by visiting: <http://bit.ly/UUbtiq>. For math and music fun, share the animated video of the ants marching one-by-one, two-by-two, and three-by-three from Grandparents Games which is posted on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/XhPq4P>. Challenge students to form the lines of numbers like the ants in the video.

Oral Language Dramatic Reading To practice fluency and oral expression, help students do a dramatic reading of the story. Choose one or several strong readers to read the narration (or read it yourself). Assign other students the dialogue of the different characters: the ant queen, the ant judge, Lucas, Speedy, Rene, and Lucas's father. Have students rehearse their lines several times and then present their dramatic reading to the class and make an audio recording of it.

Science All About Ants After reading *The Ant Bully*, students may wonder how much of the information they

learned about ants is true and how much is fantasy. Is there really a queen in an ant colony? Does she sit on a pink throne? Challenge students to come up with a list of questions about ants. Then help them find answers in books or on science websites for kids. Students may also be interested in watching a video about ants such as the one from Tiny Grads posted on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/REIjz3>.

Don't forget the



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Give each student a turn to answer the big question. Encourage students to give examples from the story or their own lives to support their answers.

Do you think Lucas will ever be a bully again? Why or why not?

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BIG ACTIVITY

"Stop the Bully" Poster Encourage students to create a poster against bullying using ideas from either McGruff or *The Ant Bully*. Tell them that their poster should have the following elements:

1. an attention-getting slogan or title
2. a strong picture or illustration
3. two or three sentences with tips or information

Distribute the **Big Activity: "Stop the Bully" Poster** printable. Have students think-pair-share with a partner to brainstorm ideas. When they have completed their posters, hang them on the classroom wall and invite students to discuss them as a class.

Name: _____ Date: _____

BIG ACTIVITY: “Stop the Bully” Poster

Create a poster to stop bullying. Write a title or slogan and then draw a picture. Give tips and advice about bullying.

Title/Slogan: _____

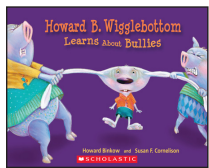
Picture:

Tips: _____

READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

Theme Connections



Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns About Bullies

Howard Binkow

Ages: 4–8

Grades: PreK–2

Lexile Measure: 680L Pages: 33

Howard is afraid to go to school. He'll have to face the name-calling, fist-punching Snorton twins. One day, he wears his special shoes in the hopes of bouncing right over them, but that doesn't work. Only when Howard finally tells his teacher does he feel safe, and the Snortons get the discipline they deserve. **Available as a Storia e-book**



Noodles: I Hate Bullies

Hans Wilhelm

Ages: 4–6

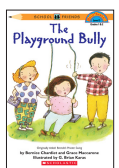
Grades: PreK–1

Lexile Measure: 20L

Pages: 32

Guided Reading Level: G

Noodles the playful white puppy loves his new bone. But then the big bully dog steals his bone away. Will Noodles find a way to get his delicious bone back? With simple sentences and delightful illustrations, Noodles' adventures are perfect for beginning readers. **Available as a Storia e-book**



The Playground Bully

Bernice Chardiet

Ages: 5–7

Grades: K–2

Lexile Measure: 110L

Pages: 32

Guided Reading Level: K

Bunny and Martin want to swing and use the slide, but Brenda says it's her playground and that they have to follow her rules. Her rules include paying her with candy to get a turn on the swing and slide. Will Bunny and Martin be able to end their bully problem, or will Brenda always have the last say? **Available as a Storia e-book**



Spiders Everywhere

Gail Herman

Ages: 3–6

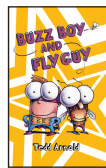
Grades: PreK–1

Lexile Measure: BR

Pages: 32

Guided Reading Level: G

Ben loves playing in the front yard in the dirt and rocks. But when a spider appears and gives him a fright, he races back inside. The trouble is, once he's in the house, Ben thinks he sees spiders everywhere. An old mop looks like a spider, and so does a crack in the wall. How can he get away from these creepy-crawly guys? **Available as a Storia e-book**



Buzz Boy and Fly Guy

Tedd Arnold

Ages: 4–6

Lexile Measure: 170L

Guided Reading Level: F

Grades: PreK–1

Pages: 32

Mom and Dad won't let Buzz's pet, Fly Guy, go on the family road trip because they're afraid he will get lost. But when Dad accidentally shuts him in the trunk, Fly Guy gets to go along for the ride. First, Fly Guy gets lost at the picnic site—but he shows up in the garbage can. At the amusement park, he appears on Buzz's hot dog. But when Dad gets lost on the trip home, it's Fly Guy who leads the way to find him. **Available as a Storia e-book**



National Geographic Readers: Ants

Melissa Stewart

Ages: 5–7

Grades: K–2

Pages: 32

Ever wonder what it's like to be ant? Here's the inside story! Ants are everywhere—on the ground, in between rocks, up in trees, and inside picnic baskets. Some ants can lift 20 times their weight, while others can fly! And there's no rest for these hard workers—wriggling through tunnels, searching for food, and defending the nest from intruders are just a few of their jobs. **Available as a Storia e-book**



Princess Pigtoria and the Pea

Pamela Duncan Edwards

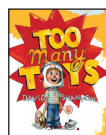
Ages: 5–7

Lexile Measure: 770L

Grades: K–2

Pages: 40

When Princess Pigtoria hears that Prince Proudfoot is looking for a bride, she goes off to see him. The Prince has the perfect plan to find out if Pigtoria is a proper princess: he'll place a pea under her many pillows and see if she's delicate enough to feel it! However, Pigtoria decides to hang out with the kitchen staff and orders some pizzas, which cause Pigtoria to have a sleepless night. The Prince thinks she'll make a great bride, but is that what Pigtoria really wants? **Available as a Storia e-book**



Too Many Toys

David Shannon

Ages: 5–7

Lexile Measure: AD600L

Grades: K–2

Pages: 32

Spencer has too many toys. He has robots, puzzles, board games, stuffed animals, and plastic action figures. Toys spill out of every drawer and closet. Something has to be done! Spencer tries to persuade his mother to let him keep them all. In the end, however, it's not a store-bought toy but the give-away box itself that captures Spencer's attention. **Available as a Storia e-book**

To find PDF versions of the Storia teacher guides and links to purchase the related books, visit:
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>

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Name: _____ Date: _____

RESOURCE #2: Determining Theme

Reread the text on the page that is specified and look again at the pictures. Then answer the questions below.

1. Lucas is squirting the ants. (p. 6)

Why is Lucas bullying the ants? _____

Does Lucas look happy about what he is doing? _____

2. The judge gives Lucas a sentence. (p. 13)

What is Lucas guilty of? _____

How must Lucas feel now that he isn't much bigger than the ants? _____

3. Lucas, Speedy, and Rene walk across the yard. (p. 23)

Lucas tells the ants about Sid the bully. What do the ants say back to him? _____

4. The Queen sets Lucas free. (p. 29)

Why does the Queen give Lucas his freedom? _____

5. Lucas hold a tiny Sid on his finger. (p. 32)

What did the ants do to Sid? Why? _____

6. What is the author's message about bullies?
