

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Best in the World

A serialized story for newspapers



written by Marc Talbert

illustrated by Betsy James

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Lesson Plans	6
Additional Activities	12
Crossword Puzzle	13
Word Search	14
Answers to Chapter Questions	15

Introduction

The Best in the World offers readers an opportunity to experience an original story and illustrations through the local newspaper. This humorous story shows what happens when youngsters take honesty and charity a little too lightly. The story was written by Marc Talbert and illustrated by Betsy James.

Lesson Plans

This guide includes a lesson for each chapter of the story. The chapter lessons are divided into five parts:

Just the Facts are literal-level questions. Students will find the answer stated in one sentence in the chapter being examined.

Between the Lines questions require students to make connections between information that appears in two or more sentences.

Let's Discuss questions encourage students to think about what is happening in the story. One question invites students to make a prediction about what is going to happen in the next chapter.

In the Real World allows students to make connections between the events and topics in the chapter and the real world through newspaper activities.

Vocabulary words are identified in each chapter. Teachers may use instructional vocabulary activities as they choose, such as for identifying phonic elements, using root words and affixes, or determining meaning from context.

Additional Instructional Activities

This guide includes several ideas for extended activities based on the story content.

Games

This guide includes a crossword puzzle and a word search based on the vocabulary in the story.

Acknowledgments

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The Great Idea

Just the Facts

1. What book was Clay reading with great interest?
2. How many times had Clay sneezed in a row — a fact that he thought might be a record?
3. What item was blocking Nick's way as he ran away from Clay?

Between the Lines

4. Why did Clay pull the book away from Nick?
5. Why did Nick try so hard to get possession of the book?
6. Who had the book after the big chase?



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Let's Discuss

7. Why do you think Clay wouldn't share his book with his best friend?
8. Why did Nick say the book was about losers doing lame things?
9. Why do you think the boys want to make their own record book?
10. Make a prediction: What record do you think the boys will try?

In the Real World

Find a newspaper story about someone who has done something very unusual. Draw a picture showing the person accomplishing the feat. Write several sentences describing the special accomplishment and explaining why the individual wanted to do it.

VOCABULARY

- **cocked**, *adj*
turned up, sticking up
- **descending**, *v*
going down
- **lame**, *adj*
considered stupid or not acceptable
- **lunged**, *v*
suddenly reached forward
- **perturbed**, *adj*
disturbed, angry
- **stingiest**, *adj*
least willing to share things
- **wincing**, *v*
pulled back involuntarily

The Grave News

CHAPTER

2

Just the Facts

1. What jellybean stunt did Nick suggest for a record?
2. What was Nick's sister's real name and nickname?
3. Why did Nick have to take care of his sister?

Between the Lines

4. What was Clay referring to when he said they could see "how many of these puppies we can eat in a minute?"
5. What was the "mother thing to say" that made the boys groan?
6. What was Clay's plan for keeping most of the \$20 Nick's mother gave them for groceries?



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Let's Discuss

7. How did Nick feel about taking care of his sister?
8. Do you think Clay was stealing when he took food items from his own house?
9. On the street, the boys saw that people were giving money a man holding a sign. Why did people give the man money?
10. Make a prediction: What is Clay's new idea?

In the Real World

Collect comic strips that show how sisters and brothers act together. Collect comic strips that show friends doing things together. Then make a poster that says, "Just Like Us" at the top. On your poster, paste the comic strips that show how you do things with brothers, sisters or friends.

VOCABULARY

- **catercorner**, *adj*
on the diagonal street corner
- **cinch**, *n*
something that is certain to happen
- **countered**, *v*
responded in an opposing way
- **muttered**
spoke with a low voice
- **squinted**, *v*
looked with eyes partially closed

Bloody Jeans and Begging

Just the Facts

1. Who was leaving Clay's house just as the three children were arriving?
2. What was the condition of the jeans Clay pulled out from under his bed?
3. How much were Nick and Jazz going to charge for her joke?

Between the Lines

4. Why did Clay feel he should get the credit for making the most money?
5. Why did Nick laugh at Jazz's joke?
6. What was Clay going to do with his torn, dirty clothes?



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Let's Discuss

7. How well do you think Clay got along with his sister?
8. Why did Jazz call Clay a "big shot?"
9. Why do you think Nick planned to give people their money back if they didn't like Jazz's joke?
10. Make a prediction: Who could be coming up the stairs?

In the Real World

Make a sign for Jazz by cutting out large letters from the newspapers. Paste your letters on a large piece of paper. Decorate your sign so it will get people's attention.

VOCABULARY

- **contagious**, *adj*
capable of being transmitted to another person, like a disease
- **exploded**, *v*
spoke suddenly in a loud way
- **fetching**, *v*
going after something to bring it back
- **huffed**, *v*
said angrily
- **pantry**, *n*
a closet or small room where food is stored
- **scoffing**, *v*
making fun of something
- **swooped**, *v*
moved in a large, sweeping motion

Lights! Camera! Action!

CHAPTER

4

Just the Facts

1. What unusual apparel was Jazz wearing when she came back into the house?
2. Where did Clay decide to stand with his sign?
3. What piece of Clay's outfit seemed out of place?

Between the Lines

4. Why did Clay rub dirt on his hair and face?
5. Why didn't Nick suggest that Clay go barefoot?
6. Why did Nick think the dog in the car would interfere with his plan?

Let's Discuss

7. Why do you think Clay didn't want his mother to know about his plan?
8. What would you have done to get more attention if you were Nick?
9. What would you have done about the angry dog in the car?
10. Make a prediction: How will Nick and Jazz defend themselves against the dog?



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In the Real World

Look through the newspaper for items that would help Boomer's owner. Draw a red circle around the items that are related to doing laundry. Draw a blue circle around items Boomer would like.

VOCABULARY

- **clogs**, *n*
a shoe with a thick sole, one that is worn over other shoes
- **clumped**, *v*
tramped, walking while making a heavy sound
- **gaped**, *v*
stared in a shocked way, with mouths open
- **spooked**, *v*
frightened, in a frantic way

A Back-Scratching Thing

Just the Facts

1. What did Jazz do to calm the dog?
2. Who was the dog's owner?
3. What did Clay tell Mr. Jerry he was trying to do in front of his store?

Between the Lines

4. Why did the dog's attitude change when it got out of the car?
5. What did Mr. Jerry do to help promote the boys' homeless money-raising project?
6. What was Clay's part of the new arrangement with Mr. Jerry?



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Let's Discuss

7. Why do you think the dog's owner offered to pay a dollar for Jazz's joke?
8. Why was Clay unhappy after he and Nick told Mr. Jerry they were raising money for the homeless?
9. Why were Nick and Clay upset when they saw Clay's mother and grandmother?
10. Make a prediction: What will Clay's mother and grandmother do?

In the Real World

Look through the newspaper for items that would help Boomer's owner. Draw a red circle around the items that are related to doing laundry. Draw a blue circle around items Boomer would like.

VOCABULARY

- **back-scratching**, *adj, v*
exchanging services
- **conned**, *v*
tricked
- **startled**, *v*
moved in a surprised or frightened way
- **trembling**, *v*
shaking

A Joke and a Record

CHAPTER

6

Just the Facts

1. Why was Clay's mother in a hurry to get home?
2. How many times did Nick and Jazz have to return money to people who did not like the joke?
3. What did Nick make Clay return to him?

Between the Lines

4. What does it mean that Clay's grandmother looked at the boys with "knowing eyes?"
5. Why did a long line of people appear in front of Nick and Jazz?
6. How do you know that Nick and Jazz made a lot of money?



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Let's Discuss

7. Why do you think Clay's mother told Nick to be sure Clay gave every penny to the homeless?
8. How do you think Clay felt about his own success in raising money?
9. What did you think of the joke?
10. What project would you design to raise money for a worthy cause?

In the Real World

Look through the newspaper for items that would help Boomer's owner. Draw a red circle around the items that are related to doing laundry. Draw a blue circle around items Boomer would like.

VOCABULARY

- **belching**, *v*
sending out violently
- **fix**, *v*
pay intense attention
- **hunching**, *v*
bending into a humped position
- **sauntered**, *v*
walked in a leisurely way

Additional Instructional Activities

1 Have students look through newspapers and magazines for different kinds of jokes. Have them create different categories for the jokes they find: riddles, puns, knock-knock jokes, funny stories, etc. Ask them to put their jokes in a collection and share them with friends and relatives.

2 Have students collect news stories about people helping other people in your community. Have them make a collage using the stories and pictures.

3 Have students look at a copy of *The Guinness Book of Records*. Show them how to find records of unusual collections, special athletic accomplishments, or special events. Let students know that today, the Guinness book is very careful to avoid publishing records of foolish acts that could hurt people who imitate them. They won't put just any record in their book. Have students design a record-breaking activity they could do with their friends. The activity must be unusual and safe.

4 Have students make a friendship notebook. They should collect news stories and comic strips that show friends helping each other or working together. They should put each story or comic strip on a separate page in their notebook. Have them look in books or on the Internet to find quotations about friendship. They should put their favorite quotations in the notebook. Have students ask friends or relatives what friendship means to them, and record their ideas in the notebook. Students can share their notebooks with their friends.

5 *The Best in the World* gives students an opportunity to think about the kind of person they want to be by examining the decisions made by Nick and Clay.
Ask students: What kind of person is Clay? What clues do you get about his character from the way he treats Nick and the way his mother, grandmother and sister treat him? What do you think about his ideas for making money? What does he do that shows he is fair to people? What does he do that shows he takes advantage of people?

Ask students: What kind of person is Nick? How does he treat people? What decisions does he make that show he is responsible? What decisions show he is not responsible?

Ask student who they would rather have for a friend — Clay or Nick? Why?

The Best in the World Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 2 walked in a leisurely manner
- 4 pulled back involuntarily
- 6 going down
- 7 least willing to share
- 8 stupid, unacceptable
- 9 a thick-soled shoe worn over another shoe
- 12 on the diagonal corner
- 15 going after something to bring it back
- 17 stared in a shocked way
- 18 moved in a large sweeping motion

Down

- 1 making fun
- 2 frightened
- 3 shaking
- 5 something that is certain to happen
- 10 suddenly reached forward
- 11 disturbed, angry
- 12 tricked
- 13 capable of being transmitted to another person, like a disease
- 14 bending over in a humped manner
- 16 said angrily

The Best in the World Word Search

C
 I R K
 S C M A C
 D P P N U K N
 E C O S G S T Y D
 R I N O Y O N S T B C
 E N S G K Y F G I Y E O O
 T C D V Z E J V H G L Q R B U
 N H W D E B D K K B P K B A E J N
 U A Q A R D F D U P Z M T C M P D G T
 A T S I M F T E F P D X X K C K E O I Z E E
 S R B M U Q V C F B U S I S Q M R R R R H X Z R
 G L I T J B V N G I P S H C C F N J T G T E D Y E
 E L U N G E D I L U X R R R A R E U K U N B B E B J D
 B M V S F H K W P Z X B F A T F Q C F X R I B S N Z K B S
 D E A S U O I G A T N O C T E O C J L O X B H J F N V G A I E
 R L H W G D G I H N X C R G S F I O G T E C P D O X U B D
 Y Q P F C F C P K H C I W W R J G N U D T U E C Z W C
 I J C O T J R I O I Z Z O N X S I Q O E D P G A C
 K S H V R N R R I R U O N N A D F G F J A F P
 G T P G N U N H M U P F L E N B K Q V G Y
 B I E W W H X S Y E B L N E P C U J L
 R N Z J H E U K D T G D C J H P G
 P G K Y M G Z R R F T S A U N
 K I V R X A D L Q T E F I
 H E U T H P C Z D D H
 E S U N K U D Q C
 R T E A O O N
 D N B P U
 G N H
 S

BACKSCRATCHING

CATERCORNER

CINCH

CLOGS

CONNED

CONTAGIOUS

COUNTERED

DESCENDING

FETCHING

FIX

GAPED

HUFFED

HUNCHING

LAME

LUNGED

MUTTERED

PANTRY

PERTURBED

SAUNTERED

SPOOKED

STARTLED

STINGIEST

SWOOPED

TREMBLING

WINCED

Answers to Chapter Questions

Chapter 1 - The Great Idea

1. *The Guinness Book of Records*
2. Twelve times
3. His sister's red wagon
4. He didn't like sharing things.
5. He really was interested in it.
6. Nick – then he gave it to Clay.
7. Answers will vary. (He didn't share well. He liked having a sense of power over someone else.)
8. Answers will vary. (He was pretending that the book wasn't that important; he didn't want to admit to Clay that he wanted to see the book.)
9. Answers will vary. (They want fame, money.)
10. Predictions will vary.

Chapter 2 - A Ton of Money

1. The boys could see how many jellybeans they could stuff in their mouths.
2. Jasmine; Jazz
3. His mother had to do some work around the house.
4. Chocolate chip cookies
5. Nick's mother told the boys that each of them was the best in the world at being himself.
6. They would take groceries from Clay's house so they wouldn't have to buy them at the store.
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary. (They probably felt sorry for him.)
10. Predictions will vary.

Chapter 3 -

Bloody Jeans and Begging

1. Clay's sister Faye
2. They were torn and stiff with blood that had dried on them.
3. A quarter, 25¢
4. He had found a way to make \$20 from Nick's mother; he had the idea to become rich in the first place; he was the one going without chips and soda for a week.
5. It was so bad it was funny.
6. He was going to dress up like a homeless person to beg for money.
7. Answers will vary. (They were bickering, but so do many siblings.)
8. Answers will vary. (He was acting like he knew everything. He was being bossy.)
9. Answers will vary. (He was being fair.)
10. Predictions will vary.

Chapter 4 - Lights! Camera! Action!

1. Gardening clogs
2. In front of Jerry's Super-Duper Grocery
3. His sneakers – they looked new and expensive.
4. He wanted to look dirty and grubby like a homeless person.
5. He didn't want to help Clay. He wanted to make more money than Clay did.
6. He thought people wouldn't be interested in humor when there was an angry dog snarling at them.
7. Answers will vary. (He didn't think she would approve.)
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary.
10. Predictions will vary.

Chapter 5 - A Back-Scratching Thing

1. A piece of chocolate chip cookie she had in her pocket
2. An older man who was in the Laundromat
3. He said he was raising money for the homeless.
4. It realized it wasn't protected anymore; it felt angry, but afraid.
5. He called the newspaper for a reporter and photographer.
6. He would offer to carry groceries for anyone who donated money to the cause.
7. Answers will vary. (He wanted to help Nick and Jazz. He thought they had saved his dog.)
8. Answers will vary. (He hadn't planned on giving money to the homeless. He was using the homeless to make money for himself.)
9. Answers will vary. (They didn't think Clay's mother and grandmother would approve of what they were doing.)
10. Predictions will vary.

Chapter 6 - A Joke and a Record

1. She had ice cream and it was melting.
2. Once
3. Nick's mother's \$20 for groceries
4. She suspected that their intentions were not as charitable as they seemed.
5. Boomer's owner went into the Laundromat and told people to go outside to hear the joke.
6. They could barely fit another bill or coin in their pockets.
7. Answers will vary. (She suspected Clay would not give all the money away.)
8. Answers will vary. (He was too busy pushing shopping carts to raise much money).
9. Answers will vary.
10. Answers will vary.

Crossword Puzzle



