Frindle

Griffin Theatre Company
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Dear Teachers,

Andrew Clements’ award-winning children’s book inspires creativity and the desire to invent new ideas in all who read it. The Griffin Theatre Company brings this feeling to life in onstage! Join the mischievous Nick Allen in this entertaining stage adaptation of *Frindle*!

In the book, Mrs. Granger writes to Nick, “Words are still needed by everyone. Words are used to think with, to write with, to dream with, to hope and pray with.” Often we forget how powerful words truly are, but the story of *Frindle* reminds us. This quirky story about creative thought and the power of words will have your students excited about reading, writing, and exploring new ideas.

*TPAC Education*

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Production photos courtesy of Griffin Theatre Company.

Quotations throughout the guidebook are from Andrew Clements’ book: *Frindle*.

Guidebook Written by:
Cassie LaFevor

General Editing:
Susan Sanders

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**A note from our Sponsor - Regions Bank**

Regions is proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee Community. We care about our customers, and we care about our community. We also care about the education of our students.

That is why we are proud to support TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is – reaching over 25,000 students and teachers – some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to our community and education and, in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we will have over 76 associates teaching financial literacy in local classrooms this year.

**Thank you, teachers**, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Area President
Middle Tennessee
Frindle

Synopsis
Nicholas Allen has plenty of ideas. Who can forget the time he turned his third-grade classroom into a tropical island, or the times he fooled his teacher by chirping like a blackbird? But now Nick’s in fifth grade, and it looks like his days as a troublemaker are over.

Everyone knows that Mrs. Granger, the language arts teacher, has X-ray vision, and nobody gets away with anything in her classroom. To make matters worse, she’s also a fanatic about the dictionary, which is hopelessly boring to Nick. But when Nick learns an interesting tidbit about words and where they come from, it inspires his greatest plan yet: to invent a new word. From now on, a pen is no longer a pen – it’s a Frindle.

It doesn’t take long for Frindle to take root, and soon the excitement spreads well beyond his school and town. His parents and Mrs. Granger would like Nick to put an end to all this nonsense. But Frindle doesn’t belong to Nick anymore. All he can do now is sit back and watch what happens. This quirky, imaginative tale about creative thought and the power of words will have your young audiences inventing their own words.

Cast of Characters
- Nicholas Allen – Lincoln Elementary School’s “idea man” and the story’s main character
- Mrs. Granger – famously strict fifth grade teacher
- Howie, Janet, Chris – Nick’s classmates
- Mrs. Chatham – principal of Lincoln Elementary School
- Judy Morgan – reporter for the Westfield Gazette
- Bud Lawrence – businessman and “Frindle” merchandiser

Was Nick a troublemaker? Hard to say. One thing’s for sure: Nick Allen had plenty of ideas, and he knew what to do with them.
Griffin Theatre’s play is closely based on Andrew Clements’ award-winning novel, *Frindle*.

**Discussion Questions**

- Do you think Nick Allen is a troublemaker? Why or why not?
- What is your favorite scene in the book?
- What are you looking forward to seeing on stage?
- There are only 6 actors playing 8 characters in this version. What are the benefits to having fewer actors? What are the disadvantages?
- Do you think it would be easy, or hard to make a book into a play? Why?
- All the actors in this production are adults. What do you think about that?

**About the Author**

Andrew Clements is the author of several children’s books, such as *The Last Holiday Concert, Things Not Seen*, and *The School Story*. He taught in the public schools near Chicago for seven years before moving east to begin a career in publishing. The idea for *Frindle* grew out of a talk he gave about writing to a group of second graders. He says this about the book: “Frindle is... about discovering the true nature of words, language, thought, community, and learning. It’s also about great teaching and great teachers, and about the life that surges through corridors and classrooms every school day.” Mr. Clements lives in Westborough, Massachusetts with his family.

“Sometimes,” Clements writes, “kids ask how I’ve been able to write so many books. The answer is simple: one word at a time.”

*And that’s when the third thing happened. Nick didn’t say “pen.” Instead, he said, “Here’s your... frindle.”*
“Every Good Story Needs a Bad Guy”

By strict definition, an antagonist is simply a character which stands in opposition or competition with regards to the goal’s of a story’s protagonist. The antagonist is thus merely attempting to hold back the action of a story. They needn’t be malicious or even hold anything against the protagonist, an antagonist must simply impede a story’s action towards the goal.

As a character, the villain has just as much of a chance as being good as they do of being evil. If the focus of the narrative were shifted, if roles were reversed, many complex villains would function equally well as the hero of their own story. To put it another way, the villain feels that he or she is the hero of their own story.

Both simple and complex villains have their place in fiction character types. As seen above, a villain can certainly grow from simple to complex over the course of a larger story, and the slow revelation of a villain’s true form is a strong dramatic tool.

Main Entry: villain
Function: noun
1: a character in a story or play who opposes the hero
2: a deliberate scoundrel or criminal

Mrs. Granger wrote to Nick “But somehow I think I have a small part to play in this drama, and I have chosen to be the villain. Every good story needs a bad guy, don’t you think?”
**Villains!**

**Objectives:** The student will characterize villains and heroes.
The student will modify a fairy tale using the villain as the hero.
The student will examine and defend the place of the villain in a story.

**Materials Needed:** movie clip from *Enchanted*, and story examples such as *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith

**Set:** To begin this lesson, use a video clip from *Enchanted* showing a story from a different perspective (the scene when Giselle is telling a bedtime story about how ‘Red told it a little differently’).

**Procedures:**
1. As a class, brainstorm typical villain and hero traits. Acknowledge that there are not established rules, there are always exceptions to these stereotypes.
2. Have students list some well-known villains – Examples - The Big Bad Wolf, Wicked Witch of the West, Captain Hook, Cruella De Vil, The Riddler, or Cinderella’s Evil Stepmother
3. What if we heard the villain’s side of the story? How would the story be different? Discuss the idea that the villain feels that he or she is the hero of their own story.
4. Look at the book *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith. (With older students, consider talking about the Broadway musical *Wicked*, or another example.) Compare and contrast this version from the traditional story. Does your view of the “villain” change?
5. Provide students with a list of well-known fairytales. In groups, students should choose from the list and outline the story with the villain as the hero.
6. Students will act out the stories in front of the class. How did the story change? Was this version believable? Do you feel sympathy for the villains? Why or why not?

**Closure:** Discuss the activity in comparison with Frindle. Consider some of the following:

- Was Mrs. Granger the villain? Did you think so originally? Did you change your mind when you finished the book?
- If the story was told from Mrs. Granger’s point of view, and you knew she was rooting for Nick, who would have been the villain instead?
- “Every good story,” Mrs. Granger writes to Nick, “needs a bad guy, don’t you think?” Do you agree? Does every good story a have a villain? Can you think of any that don’t?
Improve Your School

Objectives:
- The student will examine ways to improve their school.
- The student will construct a speech representing their platform.
- The student will evaluate speeches for realistic approaches and action plan.


Set: Display the definition of “platform” in your classroom before the lesson begins. Show students an example of a student newspaper. A great example from a junior high called *The Charger*. This issue includes information on several school and community based issues, such as the first amendment, censorship, drug awareness, fears and challenges of starting at a new school, and even helping return ancient ancestral bones to their native land. Let students look through it, then focus on the article about the Freedom Museum.

Procedures:
1. Discuss: In the book *Frindle*, the ‘Westfield Gazette’ claims Nick Allen raised issues about free speech and academic rules. As we see in *The Charger*, freedom of speech is still an issue faced often in our country. What are some other issues that might need to be raised in your school or community? Can you come up with positive alternatives to this issue? What are things that you and your classmates could do to help bring about this change?

2. Brainstorm as a class ways you can improve your own school. An example from *Frindle* would be Nick’s idea about better lunch options. Other examples might include things like longer recess, more elective choices, or less homework. Go through the list one more time and take out any that you feel will be too hard to support with reasons.

3. In small groups, students should choose one of the issues to create a platform. In other words, they will be taking a stance on the issue, one way or another.

4. They should write out their stance in speech form. Write a paragraph introducing a realistic idea to improve your classroom or school in general.

   *Questions to consider* - How can you turn your ideas into action? Include a plan of action – how can this idea help the students, teacher or community? Who would benefit/be involved? What extra work or money would be needed? How would you implement your plan? Think of all the pros and cons. Give reason to support your idea. Remind them to consider their audience as well.

Closure: One person from each group should present their ideas to the class as a speech.
Extensions:

- Hold a class debate! Choose a statement to debate, such as “Our school should provide healthier lunches.” Assign students to a side – ‘for’ or ‘against’ this statement. (Assigning them to a side helps keep personal feelings from taking over during the debate. Remind students they are trying to win an argument, not necessarily argue what they personally believe.) Again, remind them of their audience, and to make sure they choose reasons that will matter to them. “Because the food is gross” will not win an argument. Have groups take sides telling one argument. Write down the argument for each side as they speak, and at the end of the debate, decide as a class if each argument was valid. Add up the effective arguments and see which side won!

- Create a class newspaper, or if students are ambitious begin a school newspaper! What types of ideas and issues should a school newspaper highlight?

“Everyone agrees that Nick Allen masterminded this plot that cleverly raises issues about free speech and academic rules. He is the boy who invented the new word.”

--The Westfield Gazette by Judy Morgan
Dictionary Diversion

Objectives:
- The student will predict meanings of unknown words.
- The student will create dictionary entries for uncommon words.
- The student will determine the benefit of context clues.

Materials Needed: Dictionaries for each student

Set: Start by giving the class a simple oral direction using a made-up word. For example, use the word Frindle spelled backwards – eldnirf – and use it in place of the word ‘homework’. Say, “Please take out the ‘eldnirf’ from last night.” Ask students to listen carefully and follow directions. Repeat the sentence several times and use hand gestures to convey the meaning. Give more detail, such as what subject the “eldnirf” was for, etc. Continue until most of the class has guessed the meaning of the word.

Procedures:
1. Discuss: what was the initial response, what clues helped them figure out the word? What does “eldnirf” mean? When looking up a word in the dictionary, what does the entry mean?

2. Together write a simple dictionary entry for the word eldnirf on the board, including pronunciation key, part of speech, and definition.

3. Give students a list of uncommon words (see sidebar) and ask them to choose 4 of them. What do they think the words mean?

4. Ask students to write down their first idea of the meaning. Then, use a dictionary to look up the correct definition. Write down the correct meaning and then think of a third definition which may fool others into choosing it. When you are done, you will have 4 words with 3 definitions each. One definition will be correct, the other two will be false. Example: The word addle means: a) slow walk b) to add more than 10 numbers c) to become confused

5. Write the definitions as dictionary entries, including pronunciation, part of speech and definition, or write as a multiple choice question.

6. Ask each student to choose one of the words and read their definitions out loud to the class. Make sure you read them in a mixed-up order. The rest of the class should write down the student name and which definition they think is correct. Tell the correct answer, and see how many students were correct. Did the definitions fool anyone? Once the whole class has the opportunity to read one of their definitions, add up how many each student guessed correctly.

Closure: What it hard to guess the correct definition? Some words were easier to guess – why? (The meaning probably sounds like the word.) Why was it so much easier to figure out what “eldnirf” meant? Context clues in a sentence can really help distinguish meanings.

Grade Level 3rd – 8th

Standards
English Standards 1 and 6 – Language and Informational Text

Assessment
Students should turn in all 4 words and definitions to the teacher for assessment.

Word ideas
peruke, canard, loquacious, expound, obtuse, intersperse, nudnik, gruntle, abjure, foofaraw, eclectic, sallow, rancor, candor, caterwaul, chimerical, quagmire, ergo, flippant, panache, scintilla, extol, enunciate, cudgel, maelstrom, vapid,oubliette, undulate, plethora, skulk, nefarious, gloaming, wizened, cornucopia

Main Entry: en·try
Function: noun
1: a descriptive record (as in a card catalog or an index) 2: the act of making or entering a record
Contraptions

Objectives:
- The student will create a new invention.
- The student will develop and explain uses for their invention.
- The student will produce a live commercial advertising their invention.

Materials Needed: Video clip of an infomercial, prop such as a ruler for the set, varied media for drawing inventions

Set:: To get students’ minds working creatively, begin class by playing a game of “props”. Use a simple classroom object, like a ruler, and have students pass it around in a circle. Each student should think of a NEW way to use the object. For example, it could be a backscratcher, or toothbrush. As they tell what they are using it for, they should also demonstrate the movement with it. Go around the circle once. Then see if anyone has additional ideas to add before moving on.

Procedures:
1. Students will be coming up with a new invention today! The invention can be a completely new creation, or a common object used in a different way like in the warm-up. Ask students to think of their invention, and write a paragraph describing it.

2. After you have given them time to write about their inventions, move on to the next step. Show students any Billy Mays commercial (or any infomercial) as an example.

3. Discuss the benefits to the infomercial style commercials, such as low cost, only requiring one performer, and showing several benefits to the product.

4. Next, students will create a commercial advertising their inventions. They do not have to use Billy Mays’ style of advertising, but they will be presenting the commercial live to the class, and they will be the only “performer” in the commercial. They should write the commercial in script form, including the dialogue and action. If students are not familiar with writing a script, take some time to explain the format.

5. If creating a new object, they should draw a picture to use in their advertisement. If using a common object, it should be something they can bring into class to show.

6. The preparations should take one class period, and during the next class period have students perform their commercials for the class.

Closure: Which inventions were the most useful? Would you buy any of the inventions you saw today?

Main Entry: in·fo·mer·cial
Function: noun
1: a television program that is an extended advertisement often including a discussion or demonstration 2: information + commercial

Grade Level 3rd – 8th

Standards

English
Standards 2, 3 & 5 Communication, Writing, and Logic;

Theatre
Standards 1 and 8 – Script Writing and Context

Assessment
Teacher assessment of scripts and performance.

Extension
Have students create a slogan and/or jingle to promote their invention. Then record the commercials individually to show to the class.

Then – boom – a new idea hit him.
After the Show

Discussion Questions

Name someone who has made a positive impact on your life. How did they impact you?

Did the play visually look how you pictured the story in your head? What was different? What was the same?

What did you think about the actors doubling up as several characters? Did you understand when they became a new character?

Which character would you have wanted to be if you were in the play?

Was there anything from the book they left out that you really wanted to see?

If you were a reporter interviewing Griffin Theatre, what questions would you ask them? (Send us your questions, and we’ll try to get them answered!)

Additional Ideas

Play Frindle Jeopardy - Play online (http://missryan.matt-morris.com/frindle.htm) or create your own version and test your students’ comprehension.

Write a Review - Pretend you are a theatre critic and write a review of the performance. Write about your experience. We always like to hear student responses to our performances – mail us a copy of your reviews!

Reader’s Theatre – This version of performing requires no memorization, no movement and no props! It involves children in oral reading by reading parts from a script, offering less confident readers support from the script and their peers. Unlike traditional theatre, the emphasis is on oral expression of the part, rather than on acting and costumes. Choose any scene from the story Frindle, and turn it into a script for students to read out loud. Add props and costume pieces for added fun!

Tableaus – As a group, have students create still pictures of scenes from the story. They can create their tableaus to look like a scene from the play, or make it look like it did in their head when they read the story. Can the rest of the class guess the scene?

Then it became a habit, and by the middle of February, “frindle” was just a word, like “door” or “tree” or “hat.”
About the Company

The mission of the Griffin Theatre Company is to create extraordinary and meaningful theatrical experiences for both children and adults by building bridges of understanding between generations that instill in its audience an appreciation of the performing arts. Through artistic collaboration the Griffin Theatre Company produces literary adaptations, original work and classic plays that challenge and inspire, with wit, style and compassion for the audience.

Celebrating its twentieth season, the Griffin Theatre Company established in 1988, is a not-for-profit, professional theatre company located in Chicago. Headed by Artistic Directors Richard A. Barletta and William J. Massolia. The Griffin is supported by an ensemble of Artist in Residence with a range of disciplines include acting, designing, directing and production. Children's programming at the Griffin brings young people original productions of award-winning children's literature, and the touring company has brought it's children's productions of Catherine Called Birdy, Frindle, and The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales to a national audience performing it's children's plays to over 40,000 children in the United States each year.
Words are still needed by everyone. Words are used to think with, to write with, to dream with, to hope and pray with. And that is why I love the dictionary. It endures. It works. And as you now know, it also changes and grows.