

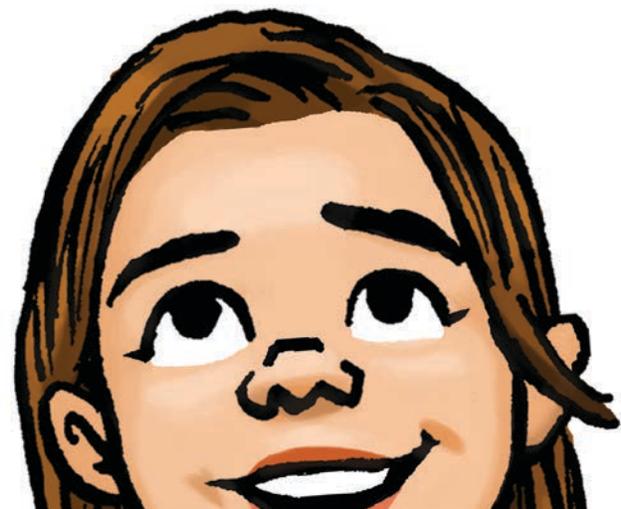
# SCHOOL STORIES

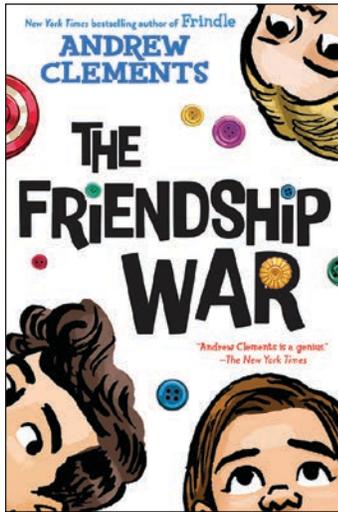
## EDUCATORS' GUIDE



Grades  
3-7

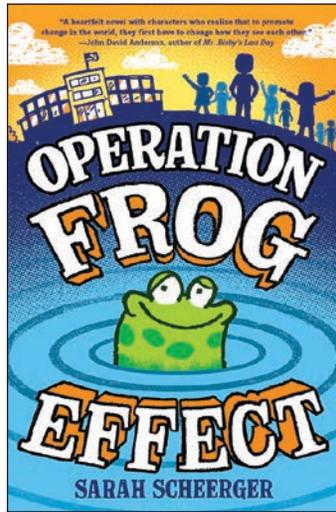
Discover middle-grade books that are perfect for building your classroom community and setting the stage for rich literature circles, Socratic seminars, or constructed response activities.





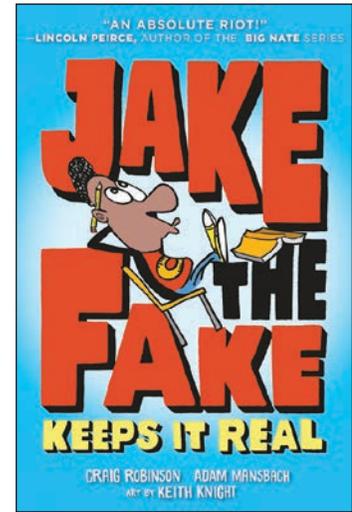
**The Friendship War**  
Andrew Clements

F&P: U · Lexile: 770L  
HC: 978-0-399-55759-0  
GLB: 978-0-399-55760-6  
EL: 978-0-399-55761-3  
CD: 978-1-9848-3268-9



**Operation Frog Effect**  
Sarah Scheerger

F&P: W · Lexile: 680L  
HC: 978-0-525-64412-5  
GLB: 978-0-525-64413-2  
EL: 978-0-525-64414-9  
CD: 978-1-9848-3278-8



**Jake the Fake Keeps It Real**  
Craig Robinson & Adam Mansbach

F&P: W · Lexile: 870L  
PB: 978-0-553-52354-6  
HC: 978-0-553-52351-5  
GLB: 978-0-553-52352-2  
EL: 978-0-553-52353-9  
CD: 978-1-5247-2132-9



CROWN

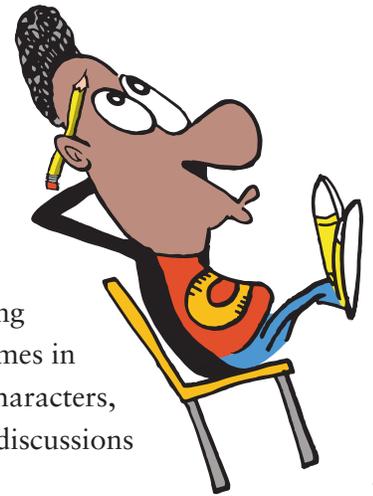
## About the Books

*The Friendship War* by Andrew Clements, *Operation Frog Effect* by Sarah Scheerger, and *Jake the Fake Keeps It Real* by Craig Robinson and Adam Mansbach make a perfect trio to explore school dynamics and the journey of self-discovery that all adolescents experience. School can be a tricky place to maneuver at any time, but especially when friendships are at stake. Remembering who you are and trying to discover who you want to become are consistent themes in these novels, which all take place in school settings. The profoundly relatable characters, themes, and settings of these books are relevant to adolescents and will inspire discussions of the challenges we face as we grow up.

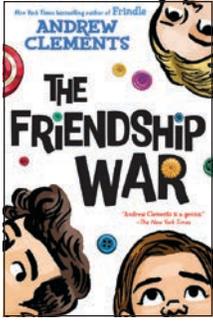
## In the Classroom

This guide has been designed for teachers to use in guided reading groups, literature circles, book clubs, or as whole class projects, and the activities align with the Common Core Standards\*. They can also be extension projects for students who want to supplement their learning. Each activity includes opportunities for kids to work independently and in small groups to present their knowledge in a multitude of ways. Students will make and write about real-world connections to the texts.

\*Common Core Standards and activities may be adapted to fit your individual classroom needs, ages, abilities, and learning styles.



# THE FRIENDSHIP WAR

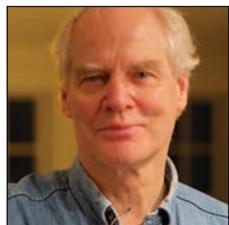


Grace and Ellie have been best friends since second grade. Ellie's always right in the center of everything, and Grace is usually happy to be Ellie's sidekick. But when Grace starts to get more attention than Ellie because of a new fad at school, their friendship

is put to the test over the smallest thing—a button! Can Grace and Ellie keep their friendship alive while surviving the button fad? And how will an unexpected new friendship and creative risk-taking affect their bond?

## Trade War!

- As a class, discuss what makes something or someone valuable in your school, in your family, and in your town. Do you think it is the same in different parts of the world? Does other people thinking something is valuable make us value it more? Why? What did the students in Grace and Ellie's school find valuable? Why? Does it work the same way in your school?
- Discuss the definitions of *theme* and *symbol*. What are some themes of *The Friendship War*? What might the buttons symbolize? Why do you think the author used the button as a symbol? How does the symbolism of the button contribute to the themes? What other books have you read in which an object is symbolic of something much more than itself?
- Discuss: Have you ever struggled in a friendship or had conflict over a fad or trend at school? Explain.



## About the Author

Called the “master of school stories” by *Kirkus Reviews*, **Andrew Clements** is now the author of over eighty acclaimed books for kids, including the beloved modern classic *Frindle*.

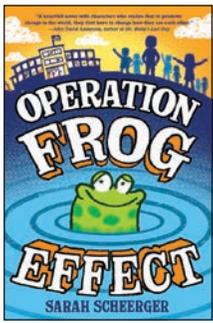
- Choosing an object/symbol: encourage groups to think of something that is in high supply or has meaning. It should be easy for all to access (or to create!) and have some type of connection to them, much like the buttons had meaning to Grace. Students should be prepared to share these connections with their peers. Give the student groups a couple of days to collect or create their object.
- Let the trade war begin! (Groups may choose to all wear the same color shirt that day or do something that makes them stand out.) They should rotate around the room with their objects and trade with other groups for what they find valuable.
- After a period of time chosen by the teacher, groups reconvene and discuss what items they collected in the trades and what made these items valuable.
- As a whole class, discuss: Did you foresee any issues with starting a new fad in your classroom? Did they arise? Which items were found to be the most valuable? Why? How did the activity make you feel? What were the motivations and emotions behind these objects and behind the trades? How did your trading experience compare to those of the characters in the book? What surprised you about the trade war?

As a follow-up activity, have students research an item that is considered valuable and explain why. For example, why is the latest smartphone valuable? Is it only because it allows you to connect with others? Couldn't you do that with any phone? Students will create a short presentation about their object and explain its perceived value to the class.

- Common Core Standards Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10



# OPERATION FROG EFFECT



Everyone makes mistakes. But what happens when your mistake hurts someone else? Told from eight perspectives, including one in graphic novel form, *Operation Frog Effect* celebrates standing up and standing together, telling the unforgettable story of how eight

very different kids take responsibility for their actions and unite for a cause they all believe in. Can eight middle-school kids, one frog, and one teacher change the world?

## Perspective Journal

Get inside the mind of a teacher! Students will create a seven-day journal from the perspective of Ms. Graham. (See below for digital options.) Consider these questions: What was Ms. Graham hoping her students would gain from the journal-writing activity?

Was she reading their journals the whole time? Was the frog a part of her plan all along? What does the frog mean to her? How does she view her students? How did Ms. Graham feel after being asked to take administrative leave?

Encourage students to use images, words, and objects (like the frog) from the novel in their journals. Challenge them to think about themes that would be present in Ms. Graham's writing. Students who need more structure can do one entry from the perspective of Ms. Graham for each chapter. For example: in Chapter 8, when she gives her big speech about character, have students write about Aviva and the running race from her perspective.

Students will then share their journals in groups and look for similarities and connections in their entries. Then come together as a whole class to create a map of Ms. Graham's character traits. Who is she, and how do we know? What proof do we have? What did you have to infer in order to write your journals?

## Digital Journal Options

Help kids be creative and present their findings in a format that is appealing to them!

- Use an online resource, like penzu.com, where students can electronically journal, share with other students, and upload pictures and clip art images.
- Students who may need writing support can use the app SpeakingPhoto. This tool allows students to upload pictures and record their journal entries orally.

Common Core Standards Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10



## About the Author

**Sarah Scheerger** is a clinical social worker who works in schools with at-risk kids, helping them figure out who they are and who they want to be. *Operation Frog Effect* was inspired by her own fourth-grade teacher.



# JAKE THE FAKE KEEPS IT REAL



Jake is about to enter middle school and he has big shoes to fill—his sister’s. He is not going to a traditional middle school with his best friend Evan but to Music and Art Academy, which is anything but usual. Can this average kid fit in to this new

world? Will Jake and his jokester ways survive middle school, or will the true Jake be found out?

## Illustrator for a Day

*Jake the Fake* is filled with illustrations that support the story and offer a visual tool for readers. Have students explain why and how these illustrations are so important to the story. How do they help the reader understand some of the jokes or symbols the authors use to describe Jake’s experiences at M&AA? What do the illustrations do for readers?

Students should write an alternate ending to the book with matching illustrations. Encourage students to think of themselves and how *they* would handle the events Jake experiences. What if Jake gets up on stage and bombs? What conflicts might arise? How could Jake resolve the situation? How will their illustrations add to the new ending and support their story? Students can draw these by hand or use [pixton.com](http://pixton.com), [makebeliefscomix.com](http://makebeliefscomix.com), or [storyboardthat.com/storyboard-creator](http://storyboardthat.com/storyboard-creator). These resources allow students to create their own comics or illustrations.

When endings and illustrations are complete, have students share their alternate endings in small groups.



## About the Authors

Comedian, musician, and actor **Craig Robinson** transitions his flair for humor from the screen to the page in his authorial debut.

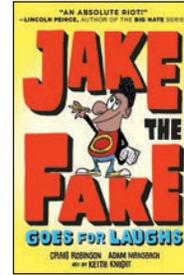
**Adam Mansbach** is a novelist, screenwriter, cultural critic, and humorist.

**Keith Knight** is a cartoonist, rapper, social activist, father, and educator.

As an extension activity, students can turn their new endings into scenes from a play and perform them! How does the story play out live, as opposed to reading it in the book? How does each medium (play, novel, illustration) affect the reader differently? What are some strengths and weaknesses of each? Which do you prefer, and why?

Common Core Standards Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3

## Also Available



### Jake the Fake Goes for Laughs

F&P: W · Lexile: 840L  
HC: 978-0-553-52355-3



# Culminating Trio Activity!

## Create Your Perfect School!

*The Friendship War*, *Operation Frog Effect*, and *Jake the Fake Keeps It Real* are fantastic reads for middle-grade students partly because the setting of each is so familiar—school! The school in each of these novels is far from perfect. After your students have read all the books, have them design their own perfect school. Encourage them to consider how the settings, characterizations, themes, and conflicts in the novels affect their choices. Let their voices be heard!

The objective is for kids to become school experts by analyzing details from the novels that highlight the positive and negative qualities of each school. They will work with their teams (groups) to create a visual presentation for a table at a Choose-Your-School Open House. Invite other classes from your school to the Open House to peruse the tables and then vote on the best-designed school!

They'll need to think of the physical layout of the school, the school name, who the teachers are, what classes are taught, and many other things. But they'll also need to consider such elements as school philosophies/values, behavioral policies, and mascots (symbolism!). To get them started designing their perfect school, have them discuss and take notes on the following in their groups. "In each of the books you read . . ."



- What did you like about the teachers? What did you not like? Why? How did the good and bad qualities of the teachers affect the school?
- What did you notice about the students? What qualities would you keep? What would you change? Why?
- How did the schools/administration handle misbehaving students and conflict among students? How would YOU have handled the situations?
- What kinds of classes and programs did the schools have? Which would you keep? Which would you eliminate? Why?
- What might be a one-line philosophy for each of the schools?
- What do you like about your school? What do you not like? Why?



After thorough discussions, note taking, and evidence collecting, teams are ready to design their poster board (or electronic visual!) for their table at the Open House. Set them on their way!

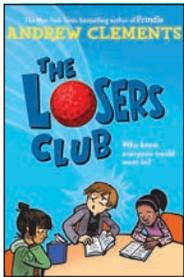
During the Choose-Your-School Open House, the invited classes walk around to the different school tables as the teams present the elements of their perfect school. Remember to include a voting jar where students from the visiting classes vote on their favorite school design. Which team wins the most perfect school? Afterward, consider which elements of each school made the biggest impression and why. Could any of these things be instituted in your school or classroom?

 Common Core Standards Correlations: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10



## Pair It!

Each of the following titles can be recommended for students who have read and enjoyed *The Friendship War*, *Operation Frog Effect*, or *Jake the Fake Keeps It Real*. The authors' choices to write from multiple perspectives, to focus on characters finding themselves and facing the challenges of growing up, to incorporate the school setting, and to create peer conflict are woven throughout each of these stories. These novels lend themselves to great conversations about all the components of literature.



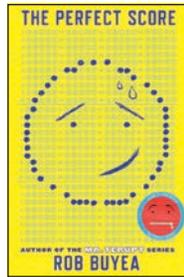
### The Losers Club Andrew Clements

F&P: T · Lexile: 860L  
PB: 978-0-399-55758-3



When Alec starts a club which he intentionally hopes no one will join, things do not turn out how he planned.

**Pair It!** With friendship woes and characters taking risks and sometimes failing, this pairs well with *The Friendship War*. There is character development galore in these two books. Analyze away! And as the books are both penned by Andrew Clements, it is also a great opportunity for a mini author study.



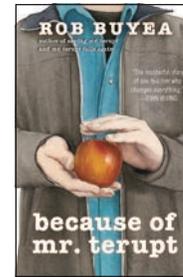
### The Perfect Score Rob Buyea

F&P: Y · Lexile: 710L  
PB: 978-1-101-93828-7



Can a group of students with an unconventional idea and drastically different personalities find the true meaning of compassion and friendship?

**Pair It!** This story pairs beautifully with *Wonder*, *Because of Mr. Terupt*, and *Operation Frog Effect*. All contain a clear message of friendship, compassion, and standing up for what is right. Each title promises rich discussions surrounding theme and characterization. And if you use *Mr. Terupt*, it is another great opportunity for an author study.



### Because of Mr. Terupt Rob Buyea

F&P: Y · Lexile: 560L  
PB: 978-0-375-85824-6

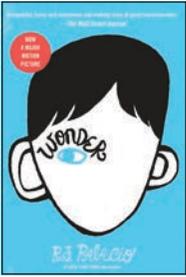


Go on a journey with seven students and a new teacher who could not be any more different. Along the way, an accident might teach them more than they will ever learn in a classroom.

**Pair It!** This story is a great companion to *Operation Frog Effect* as both account for characters coming together in support of a teacher who has made an impact. There are rich discussions to be had about characters putting differences aside in aid of a good cause.



## Pair It! (continued)



### Wonder

R. J. Palacio

F&P: V · Lexile: 790L

HC: 978-0-375-86902-0



Fitting in as a middle school kid is hard enough, but it is even harder when you don't look like anybody else. Choose Kind is the underlying theme of this story and one you will never forget.

**Pair It!** This book is the perfect match to *Because of Mr. Terupt*, *Operation Frog Effect*, and *The Perfect Score* when identifying multiple themes and multiple perspectives in literature. The deep discussion that will come from the overlapping themes in each title is a great way to encourage text-to-life connections and to get your students to FEEL something when reading.



### The Last Fifth Grade of Emerson Elementary

Laura Shovan

F&P: T

PB: 978-0-553-52140-5



How do eighteen very different kids take a stand and tell their story? By writing poems, of course.

**Pair It!** This book takes students on a journey from multiple perspectives, fitting nicely with all titles above but is poetry rather than prose. Use this book to explore the ways the characters use different mediums to approach the same theme. Students usually have (strong!) opinions about which they like best!



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Random House Children's Books

This guide was created by Room 228 LLC, with public school teacher Audrey Chipman as lead teacher.

We at Room 228 remember ever so clearly our wins and woes of good ole middle school.