

***Blabber Mouth* Unit Guide**

Themes:

- Family relationships: Rowena comes from a single-parent family, and she gets very embarrassed by the things that her dad does. All students will probably feel embarrassed by their parents/guardians sometimes, but at the end of the day they will always love them. Throughout this book, Rowena's relationship with her father plays a huge role in her daily life as she struggles with friendships and fitting in.
- Standing up for oneself: Rowena has to constantly stand up for herself as her father constantly makes her feel embarrassed, but also as a person with a disability. Rowena cannot speak or yell out like most students can as they stand up for themselves, but Rowena is still able to make an impression on everyone around her. She is a silent assertive person.
- Developing identity in a new place: Rowena moved to a traditional school from a school for people with special needs. While not all students will be able to relate to that scenario exactly, many will be able to relate to being a stranger in a new place.

Learning Goals:

- Students develop an appreciation for a new author.
- Students read a well-written narrative, which helps them develop and enhance their own narrative writing skills.
- Students develop an understanding of different family structures.
- Students enhance their vocabularies.
- Students develop skills for coping in new situations.
- Students can empathize with Rowena and any student who is a stranger in a new school.
- Students can define *simile* and list examples found in the novel. They are also able to write their own.

Vocabulary:

- Brigade: group of people with a common characteristic or dedicated to a common cause (page 8)
- Graze: scraped and broken skin (page 17)
- Ringlets: a lock of curly hair hanging like a corkscrew (page 20)
- Fraying: becoming worn at the edges (page 25)
- Goanna: a type of lizard, similar to a komodo dragon (page 28)
- Bewildered: shocked, perplexed, confused
- Sympathetic: feeling pity and sorrow for someone (page 35)
- Writhed: squirmed, twisted (page 41)
- Indignant: feeling upset because of unfair treatment (page 45)
- Frantically: wildly hurried, excited, or chaotic
- Abattoir: slaughterhouse (page 49)

- Marquee: a flashy sign, often on a theatre or hotel (page 50)
- Squelched: make a sucking sound, as if walking through mud (page 68)
- Affliction: something that causes pain or suffering (page 71)
- Verandah: a roofed platform outside of a house, level with the ground floor (page 76)
- Ulcers: a sore, often internal, developed from being overly anxious (page 90)
- Amateur: a person who has limited experience in an activity (page 93)

Literary Devices:

- Orientation (pages 1-6): Rowena is locked in a cupboard. (Flashback)
Rowena shoves frog in Darryn's mouth.
- Rising action: in the form of many small events, found in each chapter
- Climax (pages 93-97): Rowena's hired skywriter writes, "Pull your head in Dad" in the sky at the barbecue. Everyone sees the writing, Ro's dad runs off.
- Falling action: Ro looks for her dad, and then goes to Amanda's to stay. Ro and Darryn have their race.
- Resolution: Rowena's dad is locked in the same cupboard Rowena was locked in from the beginning. They go home and have a fire.
- Simile: The book is full of similes. They can be found especially on pages 8 and 42. A simile is when one thing is compared with another to make a description more relatable or realistic.

Interdisciplinary Studies:

- Health: Family Relationships
- Health: Student differences
- Health: People with disabilities
- Writing: Narrative structure
- Writing: Literary devices
- Language: Sign language

Reading Lesson: Lesson 2, Blabber Mouth by Morris Gleitzman

Goal: Students work in literature groups to comprehend pages 17-43 of *Blabber Mouth*.

Time: 50 minutes

Integration: Social skills, writing, math

Materials: Student copies of *Blabber Mouth* by Morris Gleitzman, "Blabber Mouth Comprehension Questions" (different for each group member), Literature Circle group member cards

Vocabulary:

- Simile: a figure of speech comparing one thing with another to make the description more vivid (uses *like* or *as* in the comparison)
- Graze: scraped and broken skin (page 17)
- Ringlets: a lock of curly hair hanging like a corkscrew (page 20)
- Fraying: becoming worn at the edges (page 25)
- Goanna: a type of lizard, similar to a komodo dragon (page 28)
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Procedure:

Hook (1 min.): Tell students that they will be the teachers for today's reading lesson.

Preview Lesson: Today the students will be working in cooperative groups where they must take on the roles that a teacher does—questioning students, searching for vocabulary words, finding new literary concepts, and keeping track of time.

Activity 1: Gather students on the carpet. Distribute copies of *Blabber Mouth* to all of the students. Explain the different roles in the groups by distributing cards with the roles defined to each of the students (attached). **Pre-determine the groups, thinking about what students will work most efficiently together.** Students will be expected to complete a lot of work in class, so the groups must be able to work very effectively together.

New Content: Teach students what a simile is. A simile is when an author compares two things to make the description more vivid. For example, "She was quiet as a mouse" describes how quiet she was by comparing her to a mouse. Other examples: "Sly like a fox," "Quick as a whip," "Wise as an owl." Have the students come up with more examples.

Activity 2: Get students into their literature groups and distribute the appropriate question sheets (attached). Each group member is completely in charge of his/her particular question sheet, and it is up to him/her to have the other students assist.

Review Lesson: Go over the comprehension questions with the students if there is time. There likely will not be enough time leftover though. Collect the students' comprehension questions.

Closing Statement: I hope you enjoyed acting as teachers today. It's a tough job, but with the right training, each of you is capable of doing it.

Extension: Students who finish this task early can continue writing their narratives. Hopefully reading such a quality narrative will help them generate ideas for their own.

Assessment: Students answer the comprehension questions in groups. Students are able to identify a simile from the text.

Blabber Mouth Comprehension Questions—Quiz Master Copy

Pages 17-43

Page 17—Who is Mr. Fowler and why does he need to speak to Rowena?

Page 19—How does Rowena apologize to the class?

Page 19—What is Ro?

Page 20—Why doesn't anyone raise their hand to participate in the 100 m race?

Page 26—What does Ro's dad do to embarrass her right away at the carnival?

Page 28—Who is Mr. Cosgrove and where has Rowena seen him before?

Page 30—What does Ro's dad do when he sees the moth on Mrs. Cosgrove's dress?

Page 30—What does Ro have an image of right before her race?

Page 31—Who wins the race? Why?

Page 34—Why did Amanda say, "Nice turtle," to Rowena?

Page 36—What does Amanda ask Rowena?

Page 38—What do you think the project is that Amanda is working on?

Page 39—What do Amanda and Rowena plan to do in the evening?

Page 41—What makes Ro decide she doesn't want to go? Why is it so upsetting to her?

Blabber Mouth Comprehension Questions—Seeker Copy

Pages 17-43

Each group member must identify one simile from this section of reading. List the simile and page number here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Page 21—Why does Ro refer to Tasmania and Lord Howe Island? Where did she refer to these places before? What do the places symbolize?

Page 23—What thoughtful gesture does Ro's dad do for her? What is a thoughtful gesture? Each group member must give another example.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Page 25—How does the author's **writing style** hook the section of reading starting on page 25?

Page 25—What do the author's **words** do to hook the section of reading starting on page 25? In other words, what does the author **write** to make this section interesting? Why is this similar to an orientation?

Page 30—What does Ro's dad mean when he tells Mr. Cosgrove to pull his head in?

Page 43—Why are the songs Ro and her dad are listening to like Ro?

Blabber Mouth Vocabulary

Define the following vocabulary words with your group.

Pages 17-43

Graze: (page 17)

Ringlets: (page 20)

Fraying: (page 25)

Goanna: (page 28)

Bewildered: (page 30)

Sympathetic: (page 35)

Writhed: (page 41)