



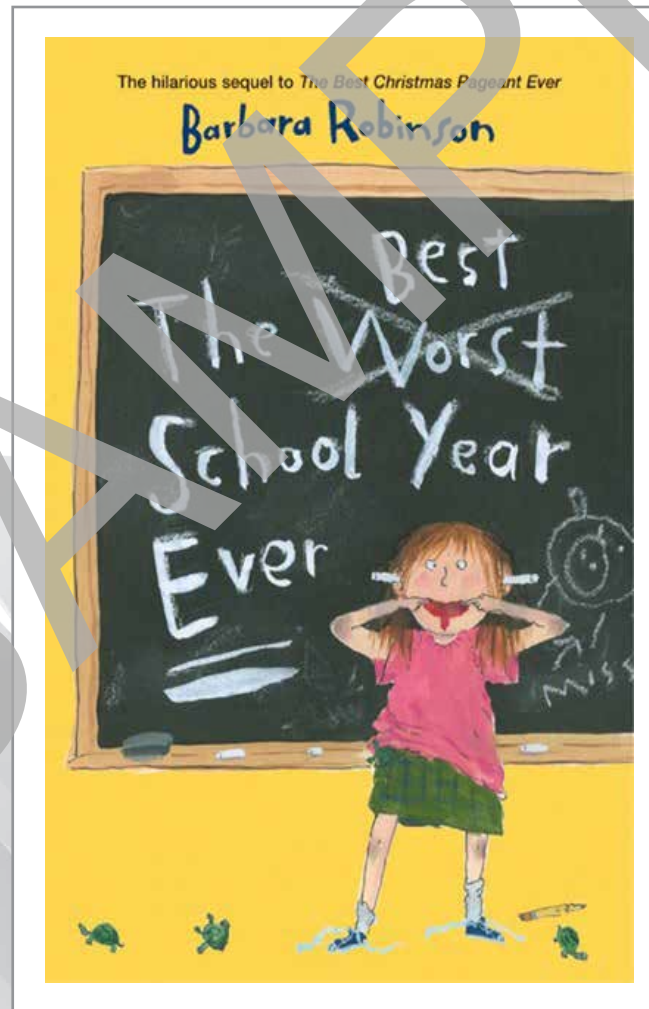
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Best (Worst) School Year Ever

Barbara Robinson



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Best (Worst) School Year Ever

Barbara Robinson

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Compare/contrast, creative thinking, research, analyzing and evaluating details

Writing/Drawing

Letters, newspaper, journal, poetry, informative, and art drawings

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussions, tongue-twisters, role-play

Comprehension

Predicting, inference, applications to science, math, social studies, health, and art

Vocabulary

Definitions, application

Literary Elements

Characterization, narrative voice, plot development

Summary

The Best School Year Ever is a sequel to *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. It is set at the Woodrow Wilson Elementary School where the students are entering another year with the wacky Herdman family. The Herdmans are considered outlaws and if there is ever a disaster, they are behind it. This year, one class assignment is to write one compliment about each student in class, including the Herdmans. The students must look beyond the Herdmans' outlandish pranks to see something good in them, something even the principal has a hard time seeing.

About the Author

Barbara Robinson has written several children books including *My Brother Louis Measures Worms* and *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, which was on the ALA Notable Children's Books of 1971-75. She is the recipient of a B.A. degree from Allegheny College and is married with two daughters, Carolyn and Marjorie.

Introductory Activities

1. Preview the book: Have the students look at the cover of the book and answer the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? The students will make their predictions about the book based on their answers.
2. Have the students use the Prediction Chart (pp. 5-6) to guide them as they read the book.
3. Read aloud the introduction to the story. Discuss: How do you perceive the Herdmans to be? Why would the author include this introductory chapter? How does the author portray the attitude of the students toward the Herdmans?
4. In the story, the author reflects on several events that happened prior to the story. Discuss: What are flashbacks? Why would the author refer to past events when writing a story?
5. Given the following clues, have the students write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story.
family pranks compliments outlaws friendship respect
6. With the students, create an Attribute Web (p. 9) for the following ideas: assignment, friendship, prank, outlaw, school. Focus on only one word at a time. As you write the first word in the center, have the students think about what comes to mind when they hear that word. Try to get the students to elaborate on each other's ideas.
7. Character Journal: On the board, list the main characters from the story and have the students choose one. As they read, have students write regular journal entries from that character's point of view. Periodically call upon a student to read an entry from their journal to share with the class.

Chapter 1, Pages 3-17

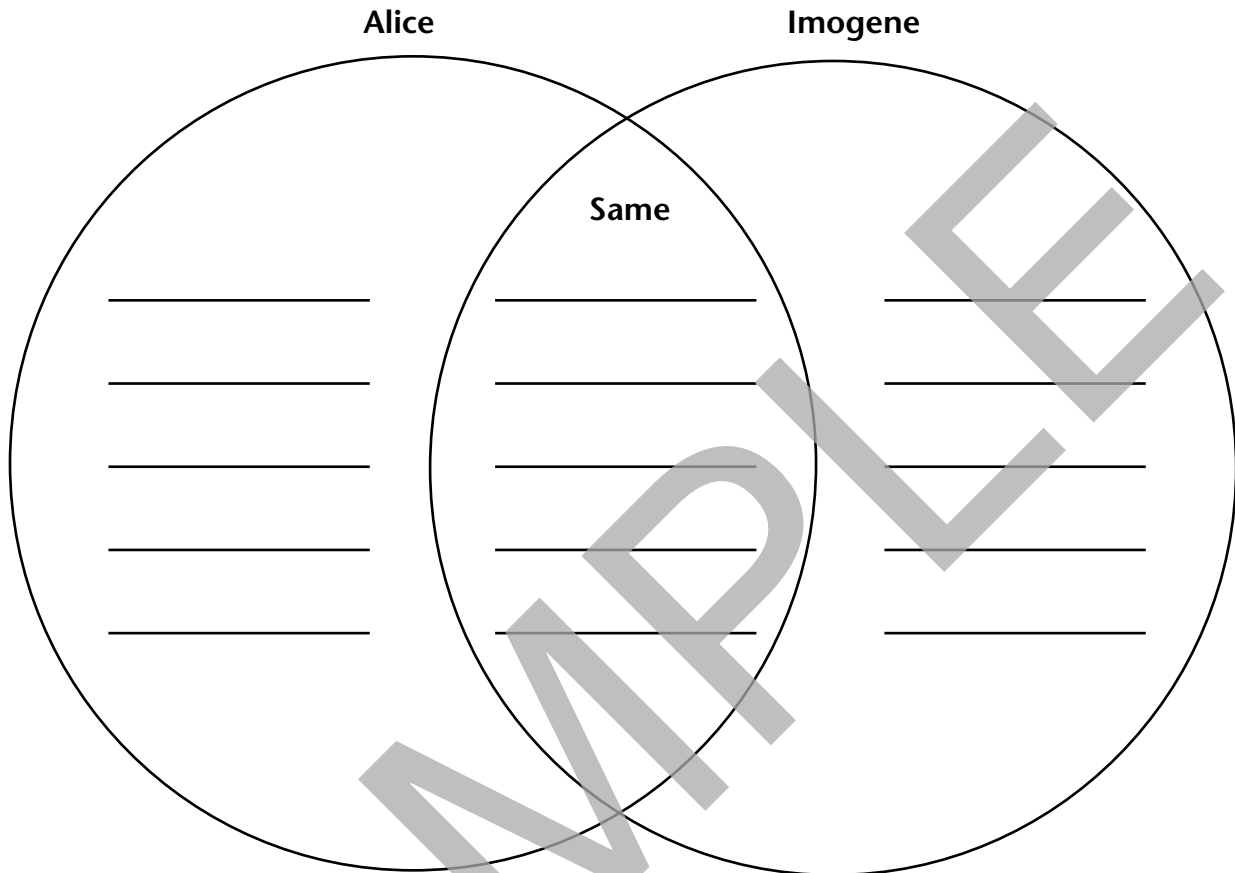
Vocabulary

industrious (4)	cooperative (4)	squealing (5)	compliment (6)
groan (6)	ignored (6)	qualities (7)	splotches (8)
iodine (8)	homeliest (11)	disgust (12)	relieved (12)
grumbled (13)	jiggled (14)	squinched (14)	gritty (15)

Discussion Questions

1. Who is the narrator of the story? (*Beth Bradley*)
2. Why does the narrator state “the first day of school is not so bad”? (*The kids tend to get bored with summer, they are tired of all the bites from insects, and it is only half a day.*)
3. Where does Charlie get the idea that after school, teachers lock the doors to eat pizza? (*He gets the idea from Leroy Herdman.*)
4. What kind of reputation does the Herdman family have? (*Answers will vary.*)
5. Why does Charlie’s mother say that the teachers would lock the door if they saw Leroy Herdman coming in the building? (*Answers will vary.*)
6. What is the “big project” that Mrs. Kemp assigns for the entire class? (*Compliments for Classmates.*)
7. Why do you suppose a third-grade teacher might assign such a project? (*Answers will vary.*)
8. What do you think was in Imogene’s oatmeal box? (*Answers will vary.*)
9. What assumption is made about Mr. Herdman? (*He skipped town on a freight train once Gladys was born and was never heard from again.*)
10. Why does the town say that the Herdmans are “fearless”? (*Answers will vary.*)
11. The Herdmans do many mischievous things. What are they most likely to do? (*They steal anything and everything.*)
12. What does Louella do at the store that gets her into so much trouble? (*She loses her baby brother Howard.*)
13. Who takes her brother and draws on his forehead? (*The Herdmans*)

-
2. Literary Analysis: Have students complete the Venn diagram comparing Alice and Imogene's personalities.



Chapter 6, pages 61-71

Vocabulary

psychology (61)

sneaky (65)

doomed (67)

amazed (70)

aptitude (61)

outlaw (65)

scatter (67)

complain (70)

overbite (63)

stagecoach (65)

suspense (68)

territory (71)

pried (63)

ordinary (66)

aisle (70)

crooked (71)

Discussion Questions

1. Why is everyone so surprised that the Herdmans will take an eye test? (*That would mean that they would have to know the alphabet.*)
2. Why does the eye test make Lester so nervous? (*Gladys scares him by telling him that if he misses any letters, it means that his eyes are backwards.*)