



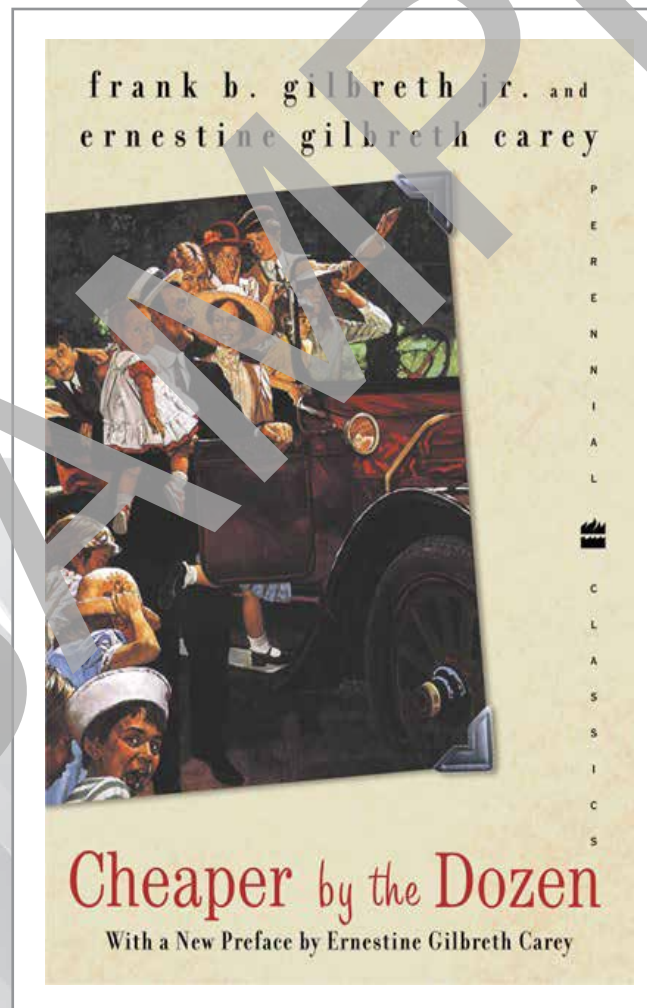
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Cheaper by the Dozen

Frank B. Jr. Gilbreth



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Cheaper by the Dozen

Frank B. Jr. Gilbreth

## 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

Brainstorming, research

### Listening/Speaking

Discussions

### Literary Elements

Point of view, biography/  
autobiography,  
characterization, irony,  
allusion, puns, dialogue,  
stereotype, setting, idiom

### Comprehension

Predicting

### Writing

Journal, free writing,  
description, dialogue,  
drama, poetry

### Vocabulary

Association, word mapping,  
synonyms

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## Summary

Lillian and Frank Gilbreth were prominent industrial engineers who opened the field of “motion study.” Not only were they hired as “efficiency experts” by companies both in the U.S. and abroad between 1910 and 1924—they also managed to produce and raise twelve children (a number they agreed upon on their wedding day). Not surprisingly, as two of these children reveal in *Cheaper by the Dozen*, the Gilbreths’ child-rearing methods reflected their interest in the scientific management of manpower and time. For example, when Dad wanted the family to assemble, he would give a particular whistle and clock the time it took everyone to converge from various parts of the Gilbreth home in Montclair, New Jersey.

While cars were still a novelty, Dad bought a Pierce Arrow, dubbed “Foolish Carriage.” He delighted in taking his family on hair-raising rides in the car and thoroughly enjoyed both the opportunity to teach his children about the natural wonders they passed on the trip—and the public attention his large brood never failed to draw. Dad had decided to save his family the expense of sending him to college and had become a bricklayer. Thanks to his ideas on how to do the job more efficiently, he became prosperous and married Lillian, a young woman from a wealthy family in Oakland, California. In the belief that what would work in managing a factory would also work in directing a family, they assigned purchasing committees and set up a Family Council—patterned after an employer–employee board—which made decisions about everything from how to divide chores to whether or not to get a dog.

The children were expected to learn to read and write at an early age, and Dad made periodic surprise visits at school to prod teachers into skipping his children from one grade to the next. During World War I, Dad volunteered to do motion-study training in assembling automatic weapons. When he was ordered to Oklahoma, Mother decided to take her (then seven) children by train to visit her family in California. Luckily Dad was able to board the train at Chicago on the way back to help Mother, as all seven children had come down with whooping cough.

When the family doctor suggested that some of the children needed their tonsils removed, Dad had the procedures filmed as part of a motion study project. Even when the family went to Nantucket on summer vacations, Dad slipped education into the daily routine—as when he painted Morse Code instructions on the dormitory bedrooms. As a reward for the children’s learning to swim, Dad acquired the *Rena*, a twenty-foot catboat which he trained the children to operate.

One of Dad’s favorite hobbies was photography. Once, while working on a job for an automatic pencil company, he photographed the children burying a casket filled with pencils; the children didn’t appreciate the attention they received as a result of that newsreel at the movies.

Although Mother and Dad tried to impress on their children the importance of table manners, the children enjoyed teasing guests at the table. Despite their antics, they were subdued by Dad’s sister, Aunt Anne, a battle-ax of a woman who had agreed to baby-sit while Mom and Dad went on a lecture tour. They had better luck getting the goat of an intrusive woman psychologist who came to give them IQ tests.

- g) In my family, work around the house...
- h) When one of the kids in my family gets in trouble...
- i) To be efficient...

10. **Critical Reading:** Instruct students to look for evidence that the Gilbreths value *efficiency* and mark those passages with an E as they read.

## Chapters 1-3: pages 1-20

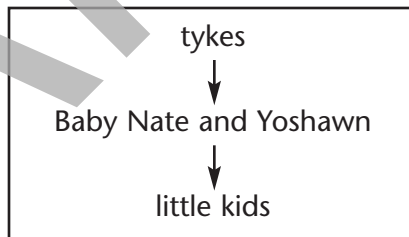
### Vocabulary

gall 1	regimentation 2	bedlam 2	gimlet 2
blandly 3	impressionable 3	composure 3	incredulously 6
quadrupeds 7	hales 7	treading 8	Taj Mahal 8
novelty 8	intricacies 9	petcocks 9	ominously 9
supplication 9	mutilation 9	isinglass 10	mufti 10
balked 10	extricate 11	livid 11	rhetorical 12
fraught 12	perpetual 12	optimist 12	fray 12
emitting 12	porte-cochere 13	deportment 13	promenade 14
lurid 14	vitality 15	calliope 16	coincide 16
emphatically 18	tykes 18	penultimate 18	reprobates 19

### Vocabulary Activity

Have students make up individual vocabulary cards connecting the target word and its definition with something or someone from the student's personal experience or observation.

For example, if "tykes" happens to describe a student's two younger cousins, the student's card might look like this:



### Discussion Questions

1. Who is telling the story? (*The story is told from the children's point of view—"Dad...our house..."*) What tone of voice do you imagine as you "listen" to the speaker in your head? (*affectionate, amiable, gently ironic at times*)
2. What did Dad and Mother do for a living? (*Both were engineers involved in "motion study."*) Do you think you would find "motion study" interesting? (*This study involves analysis of wasted motions, often in factories, in order to increase efficiency.*) What does the picture on page 4 have to do with motion study? (*Dad was experimenting with two razors to see if he could shave faster.*)

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3. How did Dad and Mother try to get their kids to do their self-care and chores efficiently? *(They put up work charts in the bathroom, which each child was required to initial; each older child was responsible for one younger one.)* Is there a system for chores in your household?
  4. How did Dad and Mother treat their children? *(Both were loving and respectful; Dad stuck up for his children if outsiders criticized them, but expected them to do as he said.)* Why did Dad and Mother have so many children? *(love of children, Dad's desire for an audience and his interest in teaching and efficiency)* Do you think these were good reasons?
  5. What was the "assembly call"? *(When Dad whistled, everyone was expected to come running.)* What do your parents do when they want everyone in the family to gather together?
  6. What was "Foolish Carriage"? *(the family's Pierce Arrow car)* How did it get that name? *(Dad said it was foolish for a man with so many children to think he could afford a car.)* What was the Klaxon? *(the electric horn)* What were rides in "Foolish Carriage" like? *(Mother and the kids were terrified by Dad's driving.)* Did you ever have a name for a family car?
  7. When showing the family the new house in Montclair, New Jersey, what trick did Dad pull on them? *(He drove the family to a dilapidated, abandoned home and told them that this was their new house.)* What trick did Bill pull on Dad with the "birdie"? *(Dad would tease the kids by telling them to look under the hood for the birdie, then blare the horn in their ears; Bill did the same thing to Dad one day while Dad was trying to fix the car.)* How would you like to have Mr. Gilbreth as a father?
  8. Why did the parents always insist on roll-call during family trips even though the kids insisted it was a waste of time? *(One got left behind once in New London.)* Has anyone in your family ever been left behind?
  9. What is shown on page 17? *(Whenever the car had to pass through a toll gate on the road, Dad would ask whether the group "came cheaper by the dozen.")* How did Mr. Gilbreth fib to save money on trips like these? *(He pretended that his children were whatever ethnicity the toll-keeper appeared to be, in hopes that the charge would be lowered.)* Was this wrong? How did he embarrass the children—and even his wife—on these trips? *(They were embarrassed by the way he joked with bystanders about the size of the family.)*
  10. **Prediction:** What sort of families do you suppose Mr. and Mrs. Gilbreth were born into?

### Writing Activities

- a) You are Anne, the oldest child. Write an entry in your journal about why you sometimes wish you were an only child.
- b) Dad enjoyed pretending that he was the superintendent of an orphanage on wheels, "Gilbreth's Retreat for the Red-Haired Offspring of Unwed but Repentant Reprobates" (p. 19). Mother declared that this was "not humorous." Create a list of four other descriptions of the family Dad would have thought funny—but that Mother would not have.