



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The Laundry News**

Andrew Clements

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

# The Laundry News

Andrew Clements

## 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

Critical analysis,  
compare/contrast, problem  
solving, critical thinking,  
research, predicting

### Comprehension

Identifying supporting details  
and evidence, making  
generalizations and  
inferences, cause/effect,  
summarizing, main idea

### Vocabulary

Synonyms, prefixes and  
suffixes, categorizing, parts of  
speech, definitions, word  
mapping

### Writing

Reading journal, creative  
writing, newspaper articles,  
essays

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, interviewing,  
critical listening

### Literary Elements

Story mapping,  
characterization

### Across the Curriculum

Technology—desktop  
publishing, Internet research;  
Math—budgeting,  
computing; Art—illustration

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**Genre:** fiction

**Setting:** Carlton, a small city outside of Chicago, Illinois

**Point of View:** third-person narrative

**Themes:** truth, mercy, empathy, inclusion, fairness, justice, forgiveness

**Conflict:** person vs. person, person vs. authority, person vs. his/her past

**Style:** mimics newspaper articles

**Tone:** humorous, optimistic

## Summary

Cara Landry is a gifted fifth-grade reporter who learns that journalism requires telling the truth in a merciful way. When she writes an editorial accusing her Social Studies teacher, Mr. Larson, of poor teaching, she and the other students in her class learn just how far freedom of speech extends. Can reporters write anything they want to? When Cara writes without mercy, her newspaper, *The Landry News*, puts Mr. Larson's career on the line. Cara's editorial comes to the attention of the school's principal, Dr. Barnes, who sees the newspaper as an opportunity to fire the lackadaisical Mr. Larson. Dr. Barnes, however, must prove that Mr. Larson uses poor judgement as newspaper sponsor, pitting Dr. Barnes against Mr. Larson, his students, the faculty, the community, and the First Amendment.

## About the Author

Andrew Clements loved to read as a child. When he became a teacher, he sought out books that would lead to great classroom discussion. Later, he relished the opportunity to edit and write early readers, picture books, and novels for middle graders. Many of his stories fall into the genre "school stories," or books about kids and teachers. Two of his middle-school novels, *Frindle* and *The Landry News*, fall into this category. These two novels deal with student-teacher relationships and their plots reflect Clements' passion for words. According to the author, knowing the power of words makes people better thinkers, writers, and speakers. Clements enjoys visiting schools to keep in touch with what he's writing about—and also to have fun. He likes to write things with substance—books that will help students discover who they are, what their talents are, and what they know. Andrew Clements lives in Westborough, Massachusetts, with his wife. He has four sons: John, Nathaniel, George, and Charles.

## Initiating Activities

1. Preview the Book: Direct students to look at the book title and cover for *The Landry News*. Ask: What do you think the story will be about? Do you think that this chapter book will be funny or serious? Have you read any other books by Andrew Clements? Have students make some predictions and list their responses.
2. Predict: Have a student read the back cover aloud. Relate the information given to the front cover and, as a class, predict how the plot will evolve.

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3. List Possibilities: Distribute a copy of the First Amendment to each student as an artifact to associate with the book. (See the page preceding page 1 of the novel.) *The Landry News* is a story about freedom of the press. In a cooperative group, have students list the advantages and possible disadvantages of this freedom, guaranteed by the Constitution. After reading the novel, students can compare the advantages and disadvantages that they listed to those presented in the story.
  4. Explore a Problematic Situation: Ask students to imagine themselves in Cara's situation. Read this scenario aloud to the class: You are a student writer. One day, you write an editorial that accuses your teacher of being lazy. Your teacher gets into trouble. Encourage students to respond in writing: How would you feel about the situation? Would you feel responsible for any trouble caused by your editorial? What might you do to solve the problem caused by your writing? Discuss the students' responses.
  5. Make predictions: Have students read the chapter titles from the table of contents and examine the chapter illustrations. Ask students to make predictions about what they are going to read. Students should record their predictions and review them after reading the book.
  6. Read aloud Cara's editorial from pages 10 and 11 of the novel. Record students' reactions on a class chart.
  7. Anticipation Questions: Have students fill out the Anticipation Guide on page 6 of this guide. Try to elicit the reasoning students have for their choices.
  8. Response Journals: Have students create two columns by folding a sheet of paper in half vertically. As they read each chapter, they record actual words, phrases, and sentences from the story in the left-hand column. In the right-hand column, students write personal responses. These can include feelings, questions, or predictions. Students can even record an interesting vocabulary word or write about the introduction of a new character.
  9. Prediction Chart: Have students set up a prediction chart (page 8 of this guide) to use as they read the book.
  10. Attribute Web: Create an attribute web (page 11 of this guide) with students for each of the following ideas: honesty, friendship, freedom of speech, responsibility.

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## Using Attribute Webs

Attribute webs are simply a visual representation of a character from the novel. They provide a systematic way for students to organize and recap the information they have about a particular character. Attribute webs may be used after reading the novel to recapitulate information about a particular character, or completed gradually as information unfolds. They may be completed individually or as a group project.

One type of character attribute web uses these divisions:

- How a character acts and feels. (How does the character act? How do you think the character feels? How would you feel if this happened to you?)
- How a character looks. (Close your eyes and picture the character. Describe him/her to me.)
- Where a character lives. (Where and at what time does the character live?)
- How others feel about the character. (How does another specific character feel about our character?)

In group discussion about the characters described in student attribute webs, the teacher can ask for backup proof from the novel. Inferential thinking can be included in the discussion.

Attribute webs need not be confined to characters. They may also be used to organize information about a concept, object, or place.

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## Chapters 17–20, pp. 103–131

### Vocabulary

review (103)	glaring (105)	rotated (107)	unanimous (108)
masthead (111)	abnormally (112)	marveled (113)	handbills (114)
controversy (116)	acid (116)	unconventional (128)	vindicated (129)

### Discussion Questions

1. Have Cara's feelings about Mr. Larson changed? Support your opinion with examples from the novel (*Answers will vary.*)
2. How is the First Amendment, which provides freedom of speech and of the press, in trouble? (*The disciplinary action against Mr. Larson charges that the publication of Michael's story shows insensitivity to community values and therefore challenges the students' First Amendment rights.*)
3. Why is Mr. Larson excited about the upcoming hearing? (*Mr. Larson considers the hearing a real life opportunity to teach his students about freedom of the press and responsibility.*)
4. Why is Cara hopeful about the First Amendment challenge ahead? (*Cara believes Mr. Larson that the decision to publish Michael's story was the right decision and that the hearing will validate their actions.*)
5. Why do Cara and her friends decide to publish the *Guardian*? What is the significance of the name *Guardian*? (*Cara and her friends publish the Guardian to avoid censorship and to exercise their freedom to publish with truth and mercy. Answers will vary.*)
6. Describe Cara's "Mad-O-Meter." How does this help her in her meeting with Dr. Barnes? (*Cara rates the color of the face, breathing rate, and nostril flare on a scale from one to ten to determine the level of anger in school administrators. She uses this information to guide how she responds to Dr. Barnes' questions.*)
7. Describe the conversation between Cara and Dr. Barnes? Was there a "winner" in this conflict? (*Dr. Barnes asks about Cara's connection to both the Guardian and The Landry News. Cara anticipates where the line of questioning is going and effectively argues that the students have not broken any rules by publishing the Guardian on their own time and at their own expense. Because of her answers, Dr. Barnes has no grounds to stop the publication of the Guardian. Answers will vary.*)
8. How has opinion about Mr. Larson changed among the other teachers at the school? (*The other teachers recognize that Mr. Larson's experience and guidance have enabled the students to produce a high-quality publication.*)
9. What opinion of TV journalism is presented in Chapter 19? (*Cara feels frustrated by the television journalist sent to interview her and tells her mother that she prefers newspaper journalism; the journalist is portrayed as self-centered and sensationalistic.*)
10. What is your understanding of the First Amendment? How does it apply to the publication of *The Landry News*? (*Answers will vary.*)

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11. How might Mr. Larson's past actions impact the results of the hearing? *(Mr. Larson's solitary nature, the wildness of his classes, his apathy, and his poor performance reviews may lead to the loss of his job.)*
  12. How does Michael's reading of "Lost and Found" affect the audience and the outcome of the hearing? How might the outcome have been different if Mr. Larson had read it at the hearing? if Dr. Barnes had read it? *(Answers will vary, but should explore how a reader's relationship to the subject matter affects his or her reading of it.)*
  13. Do you think that Michael's story is appropriate for a school newspaper? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
  14. What part of Cara's life do you suppose are the hard, cold years? *(Answers will vary, but probably her fourth-grade year, when her parents were divorced and she published articles that lacked mercy.)*
  15. Do you agree with Cara that Mr. Larson will be a future Teacher of the Year? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
  16. **Prediction:** What effect will all of the pre-hearing publicity have? *(Answers will vary.)*

### **Supplementary Activities**

1. Field Trip: Schedule a field trip to the offices of a local newspaper. If in a large city, students can visit both a large and small newspaper staff's offices and compare and contrast the two.
2. Writing: Each student should write about a favorite teacher. What makes or made that teacher special? What about that teacher's style of teaching helped the student to learn?
3. Critical Thinking/Discussion: Discuss with students the role that technology plays in the novel. What benefits are gained when the two student newspapers are published using computers? How does online publication affect journalism?