



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# No Talking

Andrew Clements

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

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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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**ISBN 978-1-50204-035-0**

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## Skills and Strategies

### Vocabulary

Context, definitions, word maps

### Comprehension

Drawing conclusions, main idea, predicting, identifying attributes, sequencing

### Critical Thinking

Making inferences, research, brainstorming, questioning, forming opinions, cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem solving, analysis, persuasion, classifying

### Literary Elements

Dialogue, characterization, conflict, foreshadowing, author's purpose, story map

### Writing

Paragraph, letter, creative writing, report, journal, *haiku*

### Listening/Speaking

Oral presentation, discussion, interview, drama

### Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—nonverbal communication, map study, cultural study, history, grassroots movements, civil disobedience; Art—collage, poster; Math—graphing; Science—the human brain

**Genre:** fiction

**Setting:** Laketon Elementary School, New Jersey

**Point of View:** third person

**Themes:** competition, authority, respect, importance of communication, cooperation

**Conflict:** person vs. person, person vs. self

**Style:** narrative

**Tone:** good-natured, positive, thought-provoking

**Date of First Publication:** 2007

## Summary

When Dave Packer tells Lynsey Burgess that boys never talk as much as girls do, EVER, a contest develops between the fifth-grade boys and girls at Laketon Elementary School. The contest rules require no talking for two days. Students may respond to teachers or other adults at school but only with three-word answers. Dave keeps score of the “illegal” words spoken by the girls, and Lynsey keeps score of the “illegal” words spoken by the boys. Many problems arise in their classes, during after-school activities, and at home as a result of the no-talking competition. Most teachers, including the principal, are exasperated with the fifth graders and want the contest to end. However, most of the teachers learn to appreciate and even enjoy the quieter class times. When the contest ends, students and teachers alike realize they have learned new and better ways to communicate, gained more respect for each other, and discovered the benefits of cooperation.

## About the Author

Andrew Clements was born in Camden, New Jersey in 1949. As a child, he loved reading good books and believes this inspired him to become a writer. When he was a senior in high school, his English teacher complimented a poem he had written, and he began feeling like a decent writer. He majored in literature at Northwestern University and went on to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching at National Louis University. He taught in the public schools north of Chicago for seven years and then moved to New York City to become a singer-songwriter. Later, he got a job in the publishing business, where he wrote his first picture books. Clements says that he has always considered writing hard work. His first novel, *Frindle*, was published in 1996 and is his most popular work to date. His other books include *The Landry News*, *The Janitor's Boy*, *The School Story*, *Things Not Seen*, *The Report Card*, *Lunch Money*, and many other chapter and picture books.

## Zipped–The Contest

Dave Packer, a fifth-grade student at Laketon Elementary School, learns that Gandhi was silent for one day each week to bring order to his mind. Dave decides to try not talking at all for one day. In the lunchroom, after listening to the girls' incessant conversation, Dave blurts out to Lynsey Burgess that "...boys *never* talk as much as girls do, ever" (p. 16)! So begins a "no-talking" competition between the fifth-grade girls and boys in which only three-word phrases are allowed and any extra word counts as a point against the team.

Vocabulary
disgusted
explanation
prepare
shrugging
completely
opinions
whiny
arrived
ignored
experience
glared
interrupted
pointless
witnessed

### Discussion Questions

1. What happens in Dave's social studies class that threatens to ruin his no-talking experiment? How does he solve the problem? What does this tell you about Dave? (*Dave has to give an oral report to the class. He starts coughing "uncontrollably," and Mrs. Overby allows him to postpone his report. Answers will vary. Suggestion: Dave is a creative person.*)
2. What subject does Dave research for his report, and with whom is he supposed to work? Based on how they handle the research, how do you think Dave and Lynsey feel about each other? (*Dave researches India, and he is supposed to work with Lynsey. Answers will vary. Suggestion: Dave and Lynsey do not like each other, so they divide the research and each works on the report alone.*)
3. Why isn't Dave talking? What does this tell you about Dave? (*While researching for his report, Dave learns that Gandhi did not speak for one day each week to bring order to his mind. Dave decides to try it in the hope that it will make him smarter and a better baseball player. Answers will vary. Suggestion: Dave is curious and wants to experiment with what he learns.*)
4. How does Dave avoid talking at the bus stop? How do you think that compares to how Gandhi managed to avoid talking on his "no-talking" days? (*Dave uses only nonverbal communication such as smiling, frowning, shrugging, shaking his head, giving a thumbs-up or high five, and putting his hands in his pockets and turning away. Answers will vary. Suggestion: Gandhi might have spent the day away from people in meditation or prayer.*)
5. What does Dave say that initiates the no-talking competition between the fifth-grade boys and girls? What leads Dave to make this statement? (*Dave says, "...boys never talk as much as girls do, ever" [p. 16]. Dave feels frustrated with Lynsey's constant talking about an unimportant topic.*)
6. According to the author, what do most children realize by the fifth grade in regard to boys and girls having "cooties"? How does this apply to the students at Laketon Elementary School? (*Most fifth graders know that "everyone's a real person" [p. 19] and boys and girls do not have to be enemies. At Laketon Elementary School, the boys and girls still avoid each other. However, they no longer use the term "cooties" because they want to believe they are more mature than that.*)
7. Why does Dave's statement about boys not talking as much as girls infuriate Lynsey? (*Lynsey feels as if all girls everywhere have been insulted by Dave.*)
8. What rules do Dave and Lynsey devise for the no-talking competition? What rules would you have created? (*Rules: There is a three-word limit when answering any adult at school. Each additional word counts as a point against your team. All students must use the honor system to*

report their mistakes. Dave and Lynsey will keep track of the extra words for the opposing team. Any word that is in the dictionary counts as a word. There can be no talking anywhere outside of school. The contest will last for two days—starting Tuesday at the beginning of lunch and ending at 12:15 on Thursday. Answers will vary.)

9. What impresses Dave about Lynsey? What impresses Lynsey about Dave? How does this show that Dave and Lynsey are alike? (*Lynsey asks if a contraction is one word or two, and Dave thinks this is a good question. Dave answers that if it is one word in the dictionary then it is one word, and Lynsey thinks this is an intelligent and rational response. Answers will vary.*)
10. **Prediction:** What problems will arise during the no-talking competition?

### Supplementary Activities

1. Character Analysis: Begin recording information about Dave on the Character Analysis Pyramid on page 24 of this guide.
2. Literary Elements: Begin the Story Map on page 25 of this guide.
3. Pros and Cons: Modern technology has changed the way students communicate with each other while in school. Make a list of the rules in your school regarding the use of electronic devices such as iPods, cell phones, personal laptop computers, etc. Draw a T-chart, and label one side “Pros” and the other side “Cons.” Record the pros and cons of these rules on the chart. You may ask others for their opinions; include classmates, teachers, coaches, and principals. Share the results with your class.

### Teamwork—The Right Word

On the first day of the no-talking competition, Mrs. Hiatt is stumped when she doesn’t have to use her red bullhorn to quiet the usually noisy, “unshushable” fifth graders in the lunchroom. Mrs. Hiatt figures out Dave’s leadership role by carefully watching the students’ behavior. A male student speaks the first illegal word of the contest, and Lynsey happily marks the point in her notebook.

#### Vocabulary

behavior  
attention  
obeyed  
targets  
simplest  
progress  
stern  
excitement  
scene  
creepy  
awkward  
pretended  
puzzled  
dangerous

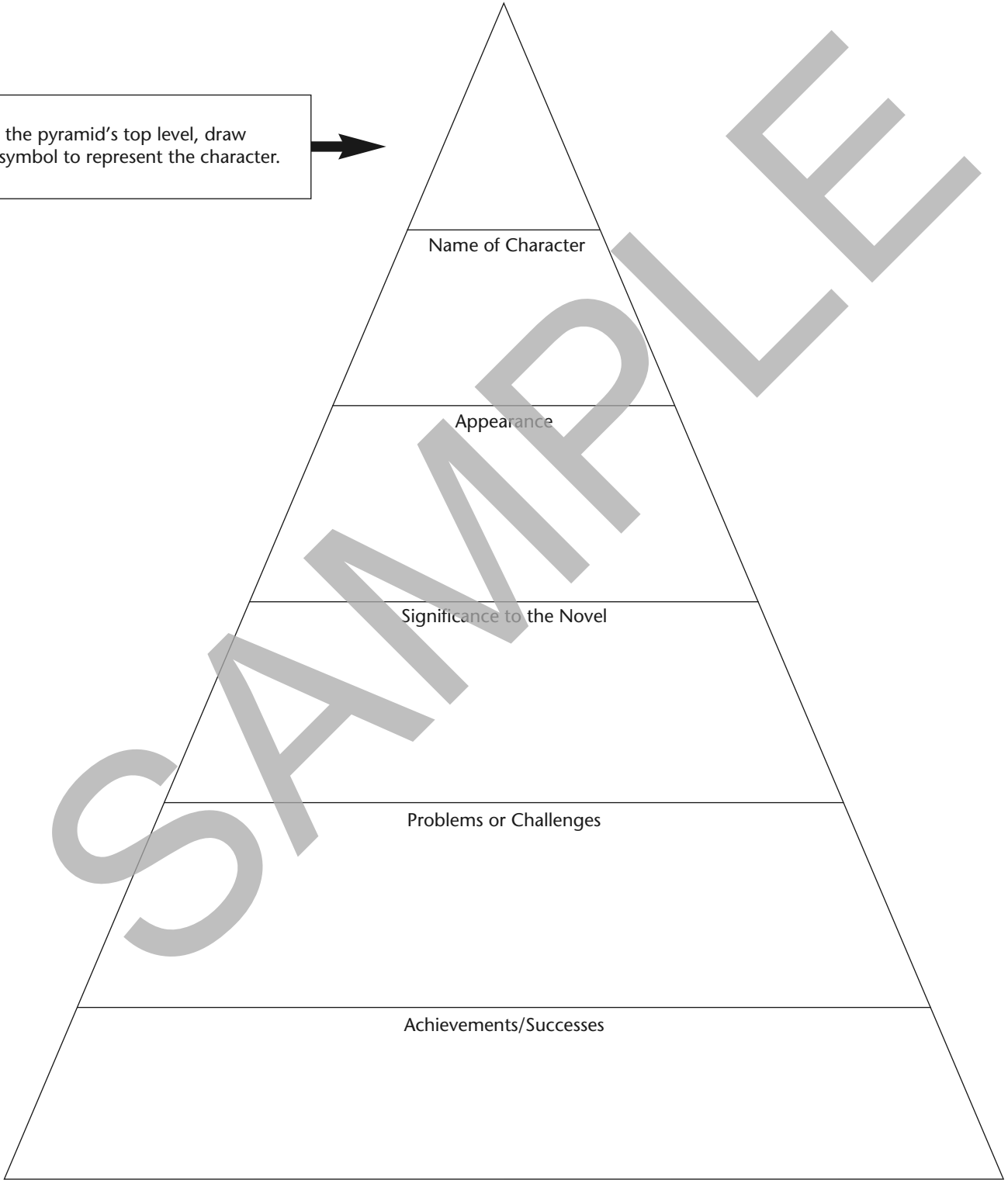
#### Discussion Questions

1. Describe Todd’s attitude about the no-talking competition. How is he convinced to participate? With whom do you agree? (*Todd thinks the contest is a stupid idea and impossible to achieve. Dave accuses him of “giving up without a fight” [p. 28]. Answers will vary.*)
2. How does the author compare school to the army? Do you agree with this comparison? Why or why not? (*Kindergarten is like basic training in the army, and the students are new recruits learning the rules. Answers will vary.*)
3. Which school rules does Dave accept? Which rules are the most difficult for him to follow? What does this tell you about Dave? (*Dave accepts the rules about no fighting, bullying, shoving, spitting, biting, stealing, vandalism, cutting in line, or snowball throwing. The rules about no running in the halls, no disorderly behavior on buses, and no candy or chewing gum are difficult for him to follow. Answers will vary. Suggestion: Dave is not a mean, angry, or destructive person. He is lively and fun-loving.*)

## Character Analysis Pyramid

**Directions:** Think about how the author describes Dave Packer in the novel. Complete the chart below, citing evidence from the story as you fill in information.

In the pyramid's top level, draw a symbol to represent the character.



# Story Map

