



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 3-5**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The School Story**

Andrew Clements

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

# The School Story

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!

---

**ISBN 978-1-50204-147-0**

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2020 by Novel Units, Inc., St. Louis, MO. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc.

Reproduction of any part of this publication for an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Conn Education.

Printed in the United States of America.

To order, contact your  
local school supply store, or:

Toll-Free Fax: 877.716.7272

Phone: 888.650.4224

3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

[sales@novelunits.com](mailto:sales@novelunits.com)

[novelunits.com](http://novelunits.com)

## Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
Characters.....	3
About the Author.....	3
Initiating Activities.....	4
Vocabulary Activities.....	4
Five Sections.....	15
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions.....	21
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	22
Assessment.....	23
Scoring Rubric.....	24

## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Research, compare/contrast, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, inferring, predicting, evaluating, supporting judgments

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, debate

### Comprehension

Main ideas, supporting details, recalling, questioning, summarizing

### Vocabulary

Synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words, idioms, root words, thesaurus/dictionary

### Literary Elements

Figurative language, setting, character's traits and motivations, author's purpose, theme

### Across the Curriculum

Math—computation; Art—illustration; Writing—creative, technical, journalism, poetry

**Genre:** fiction, school story

**Setting:** New York City; Deary School

**Themes:** friendship, dealing with the death of a parent, perseverance, talent, ingenuity

**Tone:** positive, humorous

## Summary

Two sixth-grade friends with opposite personalities unite to publish a book. Natalie is the talented author, whose writing helps her deal with the death of her father. Zoe, her outspoken friend, hatches a plan to act as Natalie's literary agent. Zoe enlists the help of their teacher, Ms. Clayton, to get Natalie's manuscript published. Hannah Nelson, Natalie's mom and an editor at Shipley Junior Books, unknowingly helps Natalie edit "The Cheater" manuscript. Natalie is offered a book contract, and Zoe contacts ABC News to cover a book publicity party for *The Cheater*. Natalie dedicates her book to her parents, Zoe, and Ms. Clayton.

## Characters

**Natalie:** talented sixth-grade girl; writes a manuscript titled "The Cheater" under the pseudonym Cassandra Day

**Zoe:** outgoing, argumentative sixth-grade girl; Natalie's best friend; pretends to be a literary agent named Zee Zee Reisman

**Ms. Clayton:** Deary School writing teacher who agrees to help Zoe and Natalie get a book published by acting as their publishing club adviser

**Hannah Nelson:** Natalie's mother; editor at Shipley Junior Books

**Letha Springfield:** editor in chief at Shipley Junior Books; Hannah Nelson's demanding, know-it-all boss

**Tom Morton:** president and publisher of Shipley Junior Books

**Robert Reisman:** Zoe's father; lawyer who advises Natalie regarding her book contract

**Fred Nelson:** Natalie's uncle; signs Natalie's book contract as next-of-kin advisor

## About the Author

A former teacher who loves reading, Andrew Clements is the versatile author of books ranging from the picture book *Big Al* to the award-winning novels *Frindle* and *Janitor's Boy*. Now a full-time writer, Mr. Clements particularly enjoys creating middle-school novels that show the relationship between students and teachers. Through his writing, he strives to help children learn more about themselves. He does this by using characters who develop a talent or a new understanding. Because he writes for the "school stories" genre, Mr. Clements spends time visiting schools to talk about writing. Mr. Clements lives in Massachusetts with his wife and four sons.

## Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could either be an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions

## Chapters 1–5, pp. 1–29

Natalie Nelson asks her best friend, Zoe Reisman, to read her unfinished manuscript, “The Cheater” and give her opinion of the story. Zoe thinks the story is very good and can’t wait to read the end, which Natalie hasn’t written yet. Zoe encourages Natalie to finish writing under a pseudonym and to try to get her manuscript published. Natalie chooses the pseudonym Cassandra Day.

### Vocabulary

expelled (2)  
reckless (9)  
loft (12)  
manuscript (13)  
sarcasm (15)  
shady (20)  
assembling (29)

### Discussion Questions

1. What does Natalie mean when she says that she does not know the end of her story, but that she knows how the end “feels”? *(Answers will vary. Natalie has an idea of the purpose she wants to achieve, but she has not yet written the ending. p. 4)*
2. Why is it important for a new author to have fans? *(Answers will vary. Fans show an author that his or her work is interesting, entertaining, informative, or persuasive. p. 7)*
3. What is the effect of having Natalie’s story appear in a different print on pages 2 and 3? *(Answers will vary. The different print highlights Natalie’s story within the novel.)*
4. How do Natalie’s mom and dad differ in their read-aloud styles? *(Natalie’s mom is calm and thoughtful, but her dad was loud and expressive. p. 9)*
5. What special feeling does Natalie get while writing in the back corner of the loft? *(Natalie feels a connection to her dad. p. 12)*
6. Why does Natalie imitate characters she has read about? *(Imitating good writers helps prepare Natalie to become a writer. p. 10)*
7. What is a push-and-pull friendship? Does this definition fit any friendship that you have? *(A push-and-pull friendship describes two people with different or opposite personalities that like each other; Answers will vary. p. 15)*
8. Who is Theodor Geisel and how does Natalie discover his identity? *(Dr. Seuss; Natalie uses an online encyclopedia to look up information on Theodor Geisel. p. 25)*
9. With whom do you most agree about honesty, Natalie or Zoe? Must a person tell the complete truth or is a partial truth satisfactory? *(Answers will vary. p. 27)*
10. Why does Natalie like to think things through for herself? *(Natalie is a person who acts based on her thinking rather than on her feelings. p. 29)*
11. Why does the author use the literary technique of flashback? *(Answers will vary.)*

### Supplementary Activities

1. Art: Examine Brian Selznick’s illustrations. How do the illustrations add to the meaning of the novel? Draw chapter illustrations of your own.
2. Writing: Write a description of your homework setting or another special environment that you have created in your home.
3. Read-Aloud: Read a favorite book to a group of younger students.
4. Creative Writing: Write a description of “the most exciting job in the world.”
5. Research: List the real names and pseudonyms of three authors.