



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 3-5

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Sideways Stories From Wayside School

Louis Sachar



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Sideways Stories From Wayside School

Louis Sachar

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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 978-1-50204-172-2

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

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

Comprehension

Main ideas and supporting details, recalling, questioning, summarizing

Vocabulary

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

Literary Elements

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

Writing

Creative writing, how-to writing, newspaper journalism, poetry

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, debate

Across the Curriculum

Math—computation;
Art—illustration

Genre: humorous fiction

Setting: Wayside School, which is 30 stories high and has one classroom on each story

Point of View: third person

Themes: the difference between right and wrong

Summary

Wayside School has 30 classrooms, each stacked one on top of the other; it is 30 stories high! *Sideways Stories From Wayside School* features 30 humorous episodes about Wayside School's teachers and students. Underlying every humorous and strange tale is a moral stressing the importance of good values.

About the Author

Louis Sachar studied to be a lawyer, but he did so well writing children's books that he became an author instead. He likes to write stories that are fun, but Sachar also believes in encouraging thinking about right and wrong. Sachar received a Newbery Medal for his book *Holes*. He also won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature. *Holes* is the first book to win both awards in the same year. The book has been made into a movie. Sachar wrote his first children's story as a high school assignment. "Apple Power" was about a mean teacher named Mrs. Gorf who turned students into apples. Sachar's teacher thought the story was silly and asked him to write another. Louis Sachar is married and has one daughter. The family lives in Austin, Texas.

Characters

Mrs. Gorf: the meanest teacher in the school; is turned into an apple

Mrs. Jewls: replaces Mrs. Gorf; is horribly afraid of cute children

Joe: a boy with curly hair who can't count

Sharie: a girl who always wears a red and blue overcoat and spends all of her time looking out the window or sleeping

Todd: a well-mannered boy who is constantly in trouble

Bebe: a girl who draws fast, but not well

Calvin: a boy who teams up with Bebe to create quick art; he is also asked to deliver a note to a teacher who does not exist at Wayside School

Myron: a boy who is chosen class president and becomes a hero by saving a dog

Maurecia: a girl who likes nothing, but whom everyone likes

Paul: a boy who sits behind Leslie and pulls her pigtails

Dana: a girl who is encouraged to learn math by counting her mosquito bites

Jason: a boy with a big mouth who is stuck to his seat with chewing gum

Rondi: a girl who is missing her two front teeth and is frustrated by jokes that she does not understand

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

Introduction & Chapters 1–5, pp. 1–22

The children on the thirtieth floor of Wayside School are turned into apples by their wicked teacher, Mrs. Gorf. Her curse is reversed when Mrs. Gorf is herself turned into an apple and then accidentally eaten. Mrs. Jewls replaces Mrs. Gorf and establishes rules and routine. Joe is a student who counts the wrong way but is able to get the right answer. Sharie often falls asleep in class. While asleep, she falls out the window, and Louis catches her just before she hits the ground. Todd gets into trouble every day despite being the quietest and most hard-working student in class.

Vocabulary
accidentally (1)
investigate (5)
ridiculous (8)
confused (17)

Discussion Questions

1. How do the children at Wayside School feel about their school? (*They enjoy having a sideways school and an extra-large playground. p. 1*)
2. Why does Louis, the yard teacher, think that Mrs. Gorf must be the best teacher in the world? (*He sees 12 apples on her desk and thinks the students have brought them to her to express their appreciation or affection for her. p. 5*)
3. Why are the children afraid of Mrs. Jewls? (*She is nice, and they have never had a nice teacher. p. 7*)
4. What does Mrs. Jewls expect of the children that Mrs. Gorf did not? (*Mrs. Jewls expects the children to follow rules and to learn. p. 10*)
5. What is special about Joe? (*He counts the wrong way but is able to get the right answer. pp. 11–12*)
6. According to Mrs. Jewls, why is school important? (*School speeds up the learning process for children. p. 15*)
7. Why does Mrs. Jewls allow Sharie to nap and to stare out the window? (*Mrs. Jewls recognizes that people learn in different ways. p. 16*)
8. Why do the children clap as Todd leaves the classroom? (*He heroically thwarts two robbers by encouraging them to learn instead of steal. p. 22*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Research: Explain how the story of Mrs. Gorf is like a fairy tale. List any fairy tale characters that Mrs. Gorf resembles.
2. Critical Thinking: Why does Mrs. Jewls establish rules for the children? Why is it significant that they are “monkeys” before the rules are established? List five important classroom rules.
3. Writing: Write an essay explaining why counting the hairs on one’s head is a difficult task.
4. Critical Thinking: Joe is able to get correct answers even though he does not count in the conventional way. Brainstorm unique solutions using new ways of thinking. Using models of learning styles/divergent ways of thinking, assess your own learning style.
5. Math: Read the description of Sharie’s overcoat on page 16 of the novel. Write a similar description of any object using math to describe it.

Chapters 12–16, pp. 47–66

Jason is stuck to his chair with bubble gum, and the students must figure out how to free him. Rondi is frustrated by jokes that she does not understand. Sammy turns out to be a rat. Deedee finds that getting a high-bouncing ball during recess is not an easy task. D.J.'s secret smile causes curiosity among Mrs. Jewls' students.

Vocabulary
specialty (49)
disturb (53)
mousey (59)
pushover (64)

Discussion Questions

1. Why do Rondi and Allison tickle Jason? (*Their teacher leaves the room, and the two girls are tempted by the opportunity. p. 49*)
2. Why does Rondi bite Louis? (*Rondi is frustrated by the jokes made at her expense. p. 54*)
3. Why don't the students like Sammy? (*He stinks, he is mean to them, and he has a horrible voice. pp. 55–58*)
4. How does Deedee solve her playground problem? (*Deedee goes to recess early by pretending to be a dead rat that is thrown out of class by Mrs. Jewls. pp. 61–62*)
5. Why is everyone so curious about the reason for D.J.'s smile? (*Answers will vary. pp. 64–66*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Creative Writing: Write jokes using characters from the book and perform them for the class.
2. Critical Thinking: Think of a time you felt frustrated, others laughed at you, or you were embarrassed. Write about the event in a journal.
3. Creative Writing: Write about another creative way that Deedee could get to recess early.
4. Creative Writing: Write about why you think D.J. is so happy.

Chapters 17–21, pp. 67–81

John can only read words that are written upside down. Leslie considers selling her toes to Louis. There is not a story for Chapter 19 because there is not a nineteenth floor or a teacher named Miss Zarves. Kathy thinks the other children are ugly and stupid, and the only student Kathy likes turns out to be a dead rat named Sammy. Ron is terrible at playing kickball but wants to play it every day. Louis, the yard teacher, allows Ron to play kickball to teach the children to share and to include others in their games.

Vocabulary
balance (68)
furious (73)
insisted (76)
inning (80)

Discussion Questions

1. What is Mrs. Jewls' solution to John's problem? (*Mrs. Jewls suggests that he learns to stand on his head to read. p. 68*)
2. Why does Louis offer Leslie more for her hair than for her toes? (*Answers will vary. p. 73*)
3. Why is the absence of a story for Chapter 19 funny? (*Answers will vary. p. 74*)