

Teacher Guide

Grades 3–4

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing

Judy Blume

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TALES OF A FOURTH GRADE NOTHING

by
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Teacher Guide

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Note

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, decision-making, evaluating, summarizing

Literary Elements

Story types, story elements, characterization, point of view

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, Reader's Theater

Writing

Journaling, research, advice column

Comprehension

Predicting, comparison/contrast, timeline

Vocabulary

Context clues, categorizing, sorting, differences in degree, word mapping

Decision-Making Grid

The decision-making grid below is supposed to make it easier to find the best solution to a problem. Give examples of other questions you should ask yourself when you are trying to “weigh” different solutions. Then fill in the grid for the following problem: My best friend has been telling lies about me. See if classmates agree with the solution you decide is best.

Problem	Criterion #1	Criterion #2	Criterion #3
State the problem.	Will the solution hurt someone?	Will it make me feel better?	
Solution #1			
Solution #2			
Solution #3			
Solution #4			

Chapter 4 “My Brother the Bird”

Vocabulary

helium
perched
disgusted

motorcycle
squirmed

pollution
hollered

cooties
peroxide

Vocabulary Activity

Match each of the definitions below with a word from the vocabulary list above:

- body lice (*cooties*)
- cry out; shout (*holler*)
- sickened; offended (*perched*)
- light nonflammable gaseous element (*helium*)
- man-made waste, contamination (*pollution*)
- twist about like a worm; wiggle (*squirmed*)
- roost; sit high above (*perch*)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you suppose the author titled this chapter, “My Brother the Bird”?
2. On the New York City map, trace Peter’s trip to the zoo. He lives on the west side of the park and has to walk to the east side. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of living in New York City? Use a T-chart to list them.
3. What doesn’t Peter like Sheila? (“*She’s a real show-it-off...most girls are! The worst thing about Sheila is the way she’s always trying to touch me. And when she does she yells, ‘Peter’s got the cooties!’* [page 24]!)
4. Why were Jimmy and Peter afraid to hear Mrs. Hatcher agree to let Sheila babysit or watch Fudge? (*They were afraid of Sheila and Fudge and they would be freed to play secret agent.*) Why was it unusual for Mrs. Hatcher to trust Sheila? (*She never trusts anyone with her dear little boy.*)
5. While Jimmy, Peter and Sheila were fooling around, what kind of trouble did Fudge get into? (*Fudge tried to fly like a bird on the jungle gym and knocked his teeth out.*)
6. Why do you think Mrs. Hatcher scolded Peter for not watching Fudge? Who do you think she held Sheila responsible? (“*You said Sheila was in charge. So how come you’re talking to me and not at Sheila? ‘I just am!’ my mother shouted*” [pages 37–38].)
7. What dreadful thought did Peter have about his mother? (“*My mother’s the meanest mother in the whole world...She loves Fudge more than me. She doesn’t even love me anymore...Maybe I’m not her real son*” [page 38].) Have you ever had thoughts like this?

8. Can parents make mistakes and have bad days? Can children make mistakes and have bad days? How can parents and children work out their problems? Complete the Decision-making Grid on page 12.

9. How did Peter know his mother was his real mother? (*His mother apologized.*)

10. Do you think Fudge learned anything from this incident?

Prediction

Look at the chapter title of "The Birthday Bash." Whose birthday will this be? What will happen? What do you think a bash is?

Supplementary Activities

1. What would Peter have written in his diary after his terrible time at the park? Would most of his thoughts be about how terrible Sheila was, how his mother had treated him, or about what a terrible little brother he had, or a combination?
2. Make a list of dangers that three-year-olds may get into. Each member of the class makes a survey and the results are charted.
3. Write an ad for babysitters. List the qualifications, the job description, and the pay.
4. Write a list of advice for babysitters.