



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 6-8**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Things Not Seen

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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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, reflecting,  
research, Venn diagram,  
critical thinking, decision  
making, creative thinking

### Comprehension

Predicting, summarizing,  
evaluating decisions,  
sequencing

### Literary Elements

Cause and effect, conflict,  
tone, characterization,  
climax, figurative language,  
theme, point of view

### Writing

Poetry, essay, report,  
newspaper, review,  
transcript, skit

### Vocabulary

Definitions, context,  
glossary, parts of speech

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation,  
interview, skit performance

### Across the Curriculum

Science—transparency,  
technology, solar particles;  
Literature—Hemingway,  
Dickens, Vonnegut, Wells,  
Hawthorne, Tolkien;  
Music—jazz; Art—sketching,  
drawing, caricatures, collage;  
History—Greek Olympics;  
Other—Braille

**Genre:** young-adult fiction

**Setting:** present day Chicago, Illinois

**Point of View:** first person

**Themes:** belonging, self-discovery, family, courage, friendship, justice

**Conflict:** person vs. science/nature, person vs. society, person vs. person, person vs. self

**Tone:** reflective, intelligent, informal

## Summary

After waking up one morning as an invisible person, Bobby Phillips begins a search to discover the cause of his invisibility in hopes of reversing it. Along the way, Bobby learns how to live in society as an invisible entity and befriends a blind girl named Alicia, who, ironically, is the only person who seems to be able to “see” Bobby. Together, Bobby and Alicia, along with their families, eventually discover that Bobby’s condition has resulted from a malfunctioning electric blanket and an unusual cosmic occurrence. Bobby must figure out how to make himself visible again before the authorities arrest his parents due to their increasing suspicion of the strange circumstances surrounding Bobby’s disappearance.

## About the Author

Andrew Clements was born on May 29, 1949, in Camden, New Jersey. His parents were avid readers who passed on to their son and his siblings a love for books and reading. While Clements wrote poems and songs during his grade school and college years, he never thought about working as a professional writer until later in life. After earning his bachelor’s degree at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, Clements attended the National College of Education—now called National-Louis University—to earn his MA in elementary education. He taught in Chicago for seven years before working as a songwriter in New York and as an editorial director for Alphabet Press, a publishing company now known as Picture Book Studios. Clements currently lives in Westborough, Massachusetts, with his wife, Rebecca, and his four sons.

In 1990, Clements began writing *Frindle*, his first young-adult novel. Though it was not published until 1996, this novel earned many awards, including the 1997 Christopher Award. Since beginning his writing career, Clements has authored over 50 books for children, including *The Landry News*, *The Janitor’s Boy*, *The School Story*, *The Jacket*, *The Report Card*, and *Lunch Money*. His book *Things Hoped For* is a partial sequel to *Things Not Seen*, as Clements reintroduces Bobby Phillips, *Things Not Seen*’s main character, as a supporting character less central to the story’s plot. Clements enjoys writing about situations surrounding school because school is such a big part of children’s lives. Besides writing, Clements’ hobbies include serving on the Executive Board of Directors of the Children’s Book Council and traveling to schools to share his love of books and reading with students around the country.

Sources (active at time of publication):

[www.edupaperback.org/showauth.cfm?authid=48](http://www.edupaperback.org/showauth.cfm?authid=48)

[www.eduplace.com/kids/tnc/mtai/clements.html](http://www.eduplace.com/kids/tnc/mtai/clements.html)

[www.andrewcllements.com/biography.shtml](http://www.andrewcllements.com/biography.shtml)

## Character Web

**Directions:** Complete the attribute web below by filling in information specific to a character in the book.

A central circle labeled "Name" is connected by lines to five surrounding circles. Each surrounding circle contains a label and four horizontal lines for writing. The labels are: "His/her statements" (top), "His/her thoughts" (top-left), "His/her behavior" (top-right), "Others' statements about him/her" (bottom-left), and "Others' behavior toward him/her" (bottom-right). A sixth circle, labeled "Others' statements to him/her", is positioned at the bottom and is not connected to the central circle.

His/her statements

His/her thoughts

His/her behavior

Others' statements about him/her

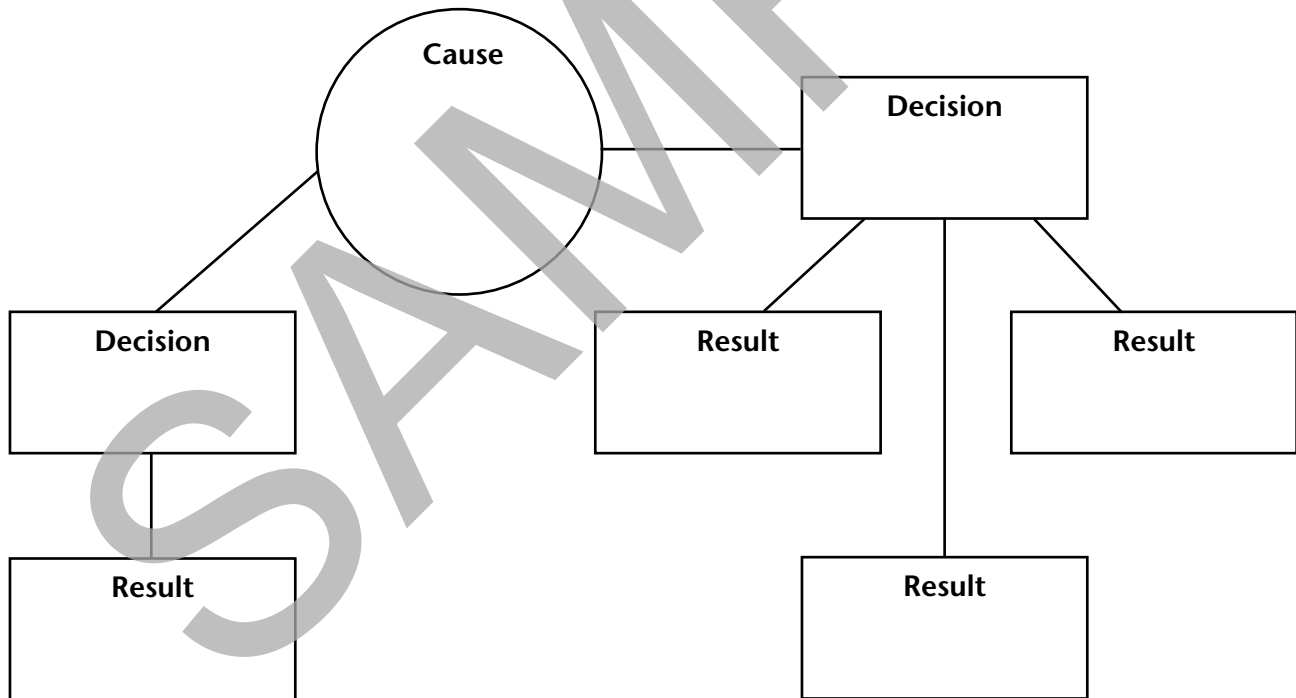
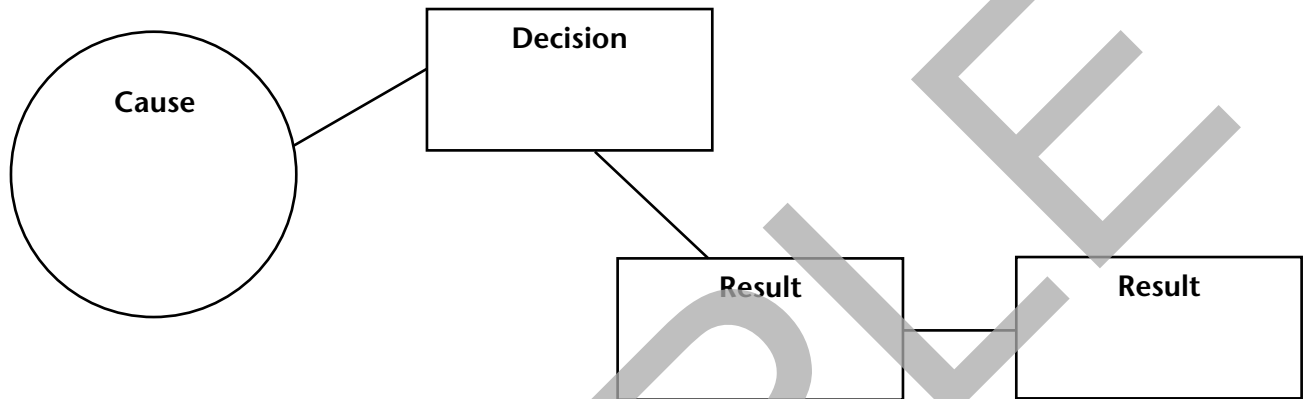
Others' behavior toward him/her

Others' statements to him/her

Name

## Cause/Effect Chart

**Directions:** Make a flow chart to show decisions a character made, the decisions s/he could have made, and the result(s) of each. (Use your imagination to speculate on the results of decisions the character could have made.)



## Chapters 1–3, pp. 1–28

Fifteen-year-old Bobby Phillips wakes up one morning to find he is invisible. After he and his parents overcome the shock of this new phenomenon, they begin to discuss how it might have happened and what they might do to reverse the situation. Bobby leaves the house bundled in winter wear and visits the library, where he stashes his clothes and walks around observing others without being seen. On his way out of the library, Bobby collides with a female student, and in the process, knocks off his scarf. Fearing that his cover has been blown and his secret divulged, Bobby is relieved when he realizes that the young girl is blind.

### Vocabulary

banister (2)  
motto (3)  
theory (4)  
phenomenon (4)  
civil (7)  
fold (9)  
tuition (10)  
potential (13)  
refraction (14)  
density (16)  
vital (19)  
disoriented (22)  
dimension (26)

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss why you think the author chose to write this book as a first-person narrative rather than in third person. *(Answers will vary. Note that hearing Bobby's voice tell the story makes it easier for readers to relate to what he is feeling and experiencing.)*
2. How do Bobby and his parents respond to Bobby's invisibility? Do you think their responses are realistic? Why or why not? How might you respond if you woke up one morning as an invisible person? *(Bobby is shocked and disturbed and decides to ask his parents for help. At first, Bobby's parents think Bobby is trying to trick them. Bobby convinces his parents that he is telling them the truth by swigging down a glass of orange juice while in his invisible state. Upon witnessing this, Mr. and Mrs. Phillips are astonished and upset. Bobby doesn't know how to act, and his dad starts hypothesizing about what might have caused the invisibility. Bobby's mother seems most upset in the beginning and thinks they should call the family doctor. Answers will vary. pp. 1–7)*
3. What does Bobby's dad think they must be experiencing? Is this a real phenomenon or one made up for the purpose of the book? *(a "visible light anomaly"; Such anomalies are observed by scientists, but no one has ever been reported invisible due to one. Unusual light activity is usually observed in space. p. 4)*
4. As his parents try to solve his dilemma, Bobby thinks that the situation becomes all "about them" (p. 9). Do you agree or disagree with Bobby's point of view? *(Answers will vary.)*
5. To what does Mr. Phillips compare Bobby's invisibility? Do you think this concept helps clarify what has happened to Bobby's body? *(Mr. Phillips compares Bobby to the Stealth Bomber. Bobby is invisible to the human eye just as the Stealth Bomber is invisible to radar. While both are unseen in different situations, they both actually exist. Answers will vary. pp. 12–13)*
6. Do you approve of the way Bobby treats his parents after he becomes invisible? Why or why not? Do you approve of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips' decision to leave Bobby alone the afternoon after he wakes up as an invisible person? Explain your answer. *(Answers will vary. Suggestion: Some students may feel Bobby has a right to be rude to his parents because he is going through a difficult situation. Others may think that he doesn't have the right to snap at his parents because they are supportive and concerned about him even though they currently do not know how to help him. Also, some students may think Bobby's parents should act as normal as possible so as to detract attention from Bobby's invisibility. Others may agree with Bobby that he should not have been left alone, even if he was asleep. throughout, pp. 18–19)*

7. What does Bobby decide to do while his parents are gone? Why? Do you think this is a wise decision? What would you have done if you were in Bobby's place? (*Bobby decides to go to the library because he wants to experience life outside his house as an invisible being just in case he wakes up and is visible again. Answers will vary. p. 20*)
8. Why is Bobby glad that the girl in the library runs over his toe with the chair? (*It reminds him that the rules are different when he is invisible. He has to be careful. If something happens to him while no one can see him, no one will be able to help him. pp. 23–26*)
9. **Prediction:** Do you think Bobby will bump into the blind girl again?

### Supplementary Activities

1. **Figurative Language:** Figurative language conveys meaning through the use of analogy. Begin making a list of the figurative language in the novel using the chart on page 9 of this guide. Examples: **Similes**—"she freaks, like she's grabbed a lizard" (p. 5); "house is like a library" (p. 15); "moving...like a gray caterpillar" (p. 16); **Metaphors**—bones: tuna salad (p. 5); students at the library: drones in a beehive (p. 23); **Personification**—"shower curtain jump" (p. 2)
2. **Writing/Science:** Bobby's father explains that because Bobby's shadow is visible when Bobby is close to a solid surface, he is not totally transparent even though he cannot be seen (p. 14). Write a paragraph explaining the difference between being invisible and being transparent.
3. **Literature:** Research the works of Ernest Hemingway and Charles Dickens. Select the author whose books you would most like to read. Write a report about the author you selected, including what intrigues you about his life or writing.
4. **Music:** Conduct historical research about the jazz scene in Chicago in the early to mid-twentieth century. Report on one aspect of jazz music in Chicago during that era. (Students may report on artists, such as Louis Armstrong or Dr. Andrew [Andy] Goodrich. They may also find information about the music itself or women's role in jazz during that time. One starting point for research could be the Chicago Jazz Archives located at [www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/cja/artists.html](http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/cja/artists.html). [Active at time of publication.]