



Curriculum Guide



Contents

Common Core Connections

Discussion Questions

Comprehension & Exploration Activities

Writing Ideas

About the Author

Sources & Links



Common Core Connections: Grades 3-6

3rd Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7

Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

4th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9

Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

5th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7

Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

6th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.



Discussion & Comprehension Questions

Chapter 1-5

- How does Josie feel about superheroes?
- Why do Toby and his friends tease Josie and her brothers?
- Why do Toby and his friends dislike Gerda?
- Why do the woman and her dog keep looking at Josie and her brothers?

“When the world needs a hero, sometimes you have to become one.” (pg. 13)

- Why was Josie’s brother Vinnie so worried?
- What happened to the superheroes?
- How did Emmett solve Josie’s book cipher?

“Cruelty comes from weakness. People who feel weak want to find somebody to look down on. But they’re already in the mud and the muck—don’t let them pull you down with them.” (pg. 21)

- How does Toby make Josie feel?
- Why did Josie want to be a puzzler?
- Why does Josie start thinking of herself as a “stupid girl”?
- When does Josie feel powerless?
- When does Josie feel powerful?

-Why does Josie think Emmett has a secret?

-Why is Harry disappointed with Josie?

-Why would the government need puzzlers?

-Why does Josie admire Kay?

-Why is Josie so curious about Kay's job?



Chapter 6-10

- What did Mr. Hissler do with the tests in the left-hand pile?
- Whose tests were in the left-hand pile?
- Who was the woman who came into the testing room?
- Who did Mr. Hissler ask Josie about?
- How did Josie feel about Akiko at first?
- Why are the girls so interested in Room 12?
- Why did Josie go after Toby and his friends?
- What did it often mean when a Western Union deliveryman came to someone's door during World War II?
- What statue did the three girls sit beneath after the fight with Toby?
- What did Akiko think happened to the superheroes?
- What are all three girls worried about?
- What happened when Josie, Mae, and Akiko touched each other at the same time?
- According to Mae, what happens in Room 12?
- Who does Josie think might work in Room 12?

“...it occurred to me that prejudices were a lot like allergies. They made it hard for us to really see.” (pg. 65)

- Why does Josie's mom keep telling her to "Stay safe"?*
- Who did all three girls meet before coming to take the test?*
- What kind of people was Mrs. B looking for to help with Room 12?*
- How are the three girls different from each other?*
- How are the three girls similar to each other?*
- Who was in Room 12 with Mr. Hissler?*
- What, according to Mrs. B, is happening to the superheroes?*
- Why did Josie choose to put on the superhero cape? Why did Akiko choose the mask and Mae choose the boots?*



Chapter 11-16

- Why are Josie, Mae, and Akiko's powers so weak at first?
- What could be in the trunk that Josie saves from the fire?

“You won’t know what you’re capable of until you try!” (pg. 84)

- Why are the reporters so excited to see the three superhero girls?
- Why do you think Josie, Mae and Akiko were chosen to be superheroes?
- Why did the manager of the diner make the girls leave?
- What did the manager mean when he called Mae and Akiko “their kind”?
- How did the manager’s behavior make Akiko and Mae feel? How did it make Josie feel?

“‘It’s like there’s two wars,’ I said softly, glancing at the manager through the diner window. ‘One fighting against the Nazis and the other against people like him.’” (pg.104)

- When the girls went to Gerda’s diner, why were Akiko and Mae looking so tense?
- What does Josie mean when she said, “They let anybody work anywhere these days”?
- How did Emmett write Josie a message using laundry?
- What word did Josie hear that made her start worrying about her friend Harry?

-Why did Josie like Harry?

-How did Josie find out that Emmett had been taken?

-Who did Emmett's sister see as Emmett was pushed into a car?

-How did Mr. Hissler find Emmett?



Chapter 17-22

- Who does Josie blame for Emmett being taken?
- Why did the girls follow the Duke?
- Who did the girls see outside the brick building?
- Why did Akiko and Mae go with Josie to find her cousin Kay?
- What did the girls see when they went into the office?
- What do the women in the office call themselves? Why?
- Why is math important during the war?

“‘When it comes to beating our enemies,’ Kay said, gesturing toward the women computers behind the door, ‘math is a powerful weapon!’” (pg. 140)

- What do you think “Project PX” could be?
- Why did Josie’s mom look so tired?
- Why does Josie think Mrs. B made a mistake in picking her to be a superhero?
- Why was it important to Josie to tuck her brothers into bed every night?
- Why do you think Harry is so cranky the next morning?
- Why do the newspaper pictures bother Akiko so much?
- Why does Harry look nervous when he tells Josie and her friends about Emmett coming to the diner for breakfast



Chapter 23-28

- What clue did Emmett leave for Josie?
- How did Emmett make his secret message?
- Why does the idea of Harry working with the Duke bother Josie so much?
- Why did Josie have trouble calling Harry “pal” when they left the diner?

“Whatever strength you need dwells within you.” (pg. 203)

- Why did Josie whistle when they got to the Carson Building?
- Why do you think Mrs. B walks with a limp?
- How does Mrs. B know so much about Josie, Mae, and Akiko?
- What is Room Twelve, according to Mrs. B?
- Why is Mr. Hissler no longer part of Room Twelve?
- Why was Akiko looking at the newspaper while Mrs. B was talking?
- Why is Josie suddenly so worried about her cousin Kay?
- What is “Project PX” according to Mrs. B?
- What did Akiko find in the newspaper?
- Why does the newspaper message upset Josie?
- Why does Josie call herself “stupid girl” again?
- Who do you think Mr. Hissler REALLY is?
- Why aren’t the rats at the pier running away?
- What is the secret to Josie, Mae, and Akiko being able to transform into superheroes?



Chapter 29-34

- How do the girls know what the Duke is planning?
- Who is “The Hisser”?
- Who encourages Josie to resist the powers of The Hisser?
- How does Mae stop The Hisser’s attempt to blow up the pier?
- What happens when The Hisser begins to hiss? What does it do to Josie?
- What happens to Akiko?
- How does Josie try to get back her brother’s bikes?
- What is Josie’s mom’s secret? How is it connected to the telegram that Toby saw delivered?

“When things get really difficult, that’s when it’s most important to work harder—and smarter. That’s when it matters most of all.” (pg. 225)

- How do the stories help Josie’s brothers?
- Who appears at the kitchen window?
- What connection between Josie, Mae, and Akiko did Akiko discover accidentally?
- How did Akiko escape The Hisser?
- What happened to Akiko’s family?

“We’re all human beings. Why do people treat each other this way?” (pg. 239)

- What did Akiko think Emmett and the other puzzlers were doing for the Duke and The Hisser?*
- What did Emmett give Akiko?*
- How did Josie, Mae, and Akiko figure out Emmett's message?*
- Why was it harder for Josie, Mae, and Akiko to transform?*
- Who did Mae see when they landed at the brick building?*
- What is Akiko's newest power?*
- Why does Josie feel stronger, even as she faces The Hisser?*



Chapter 35-40

“So I summoned all the strength I could muster, and I whispered into the night two of the most powerful words I could think of just then: I can.” (pg. 259)

- Why does Josie think Harry had betrayed them?
- How do the superhero costumes make Josie, Mae, and Akiko think they are invincible?
- Why is it sometimes hard to tell the truth? Why was it hard for Josie to tell the truth about Harry?
- Why would the enemy want to steal Project PX (also known as ENIAC)?
- How does Akiko trap The Hisser?
- Why did Harry hit the Duke?
- Who was Harry really working for?

“Though evil may seem to be winning, it shall never triumph. So long as there are good people willing to fight!” (pg. 280)

- How did The Hisser break out of the handcuffs?
- Who was in the station wagon?
- Why is The Hisser taking the puzzlers and the Secret Six to a submarine?
- Why can't Josie, Mae, and Akiko use their real names when they are superheroes?
- What was the secret that Josie and her mom had been hiding?

“When so many people had harsh words for Germans, Josie showed me kindness. She saw me as a human being first and not as a foreigner to be feared.” (pg. 295)

- Why were some people so unkind to Harry and Gerta?
- Why was the statue important to Josie, Mae, and Akiko?
- What did The Hisser do to Zenobia’s sister? Why did he do it?

“Three apart, one together.” (pg. 297)

- Where did The Hisser and the Duke go?
- How would Mrs. B describe a “superhero”?

“Superheroes exist all around us, every day. Only, their costuming might not look so obvious.” (pg. 303)

“It’s not until we’re tested that we realize what powers we possess. ” (pg. 304)

- What do you think the next mission will be for Josie, Mae, and Akiko?
- Who does Josie think Mrs. B really is?
- What clues did Josie use to figure out Mrs. B’s real identity?
- Who does Josie want to save?



Comprehension and Exploration Activities

1. *Graphic Organizers*

2. *Superhero Me*

3. *Sifting Ciphers*

4. *Learning from the Past: World War II KWL Chart*

5. *Writing Prompts*

6. *About the Author*

7. *Sources & Links*



Graphic Organizers

Venn Diagram

Unique and Similar: Comparing and Contrasting Josie, Mae, and Akiko

Character Map

Timeline

Name _____

Unique and Similar

Josie, Mae, and Akiko can't figure out why they were chosen to be together when they are so different from each other. Mrs. B keeps saying that they are very much alike.

In the large circles list how each of our superheroes is unique. In the center space list how they are alike.

Josie

Mae

Akiko

Character Mapping

	Character Name:
	Skills and Traits:
Character at beginning of story.	Character at end of story.

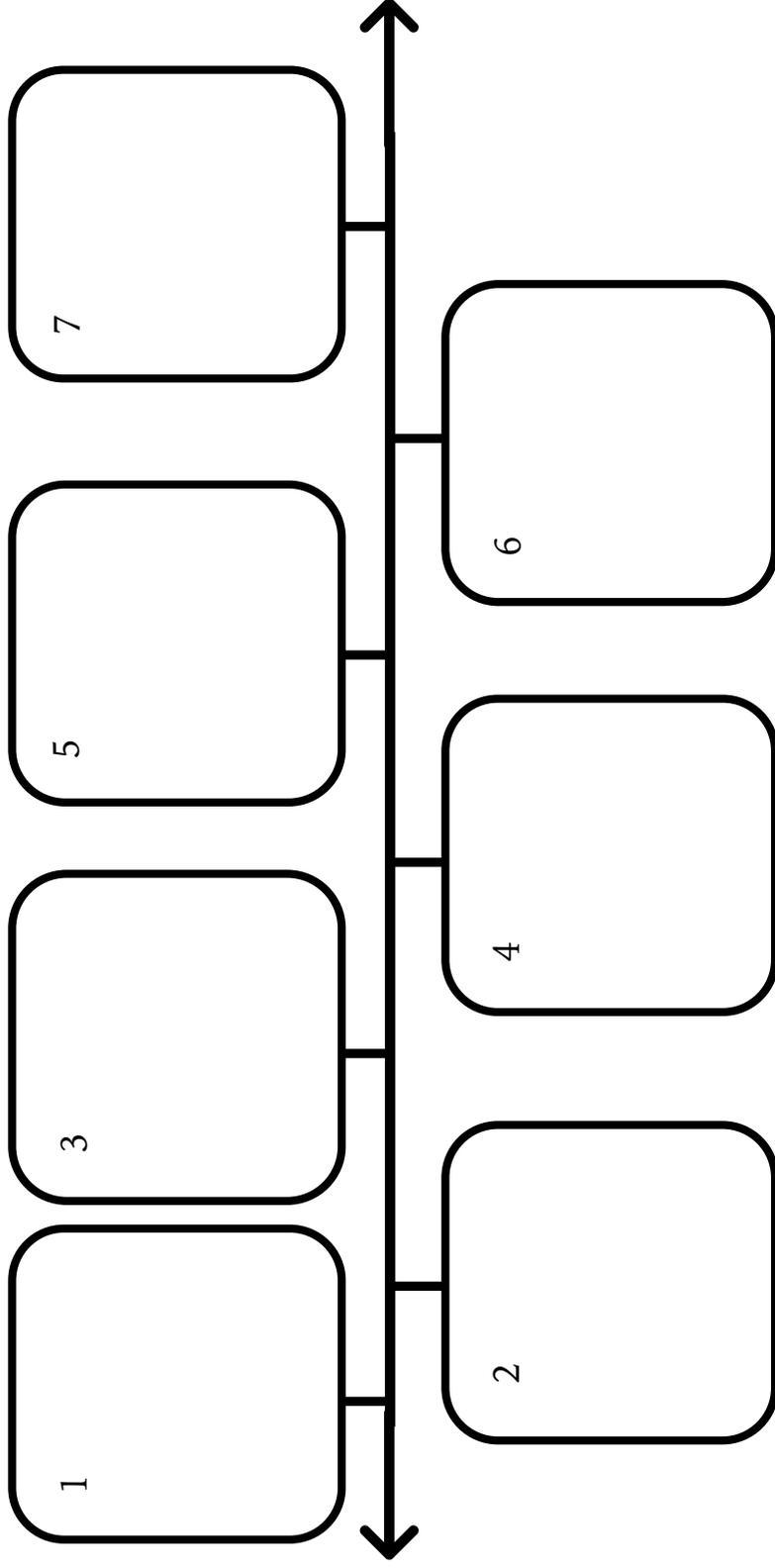
	Character Name:
	Skills and Traits:
Character at beginning of story.	Character at end of story.

	Character Name:
	Skills and Traits:
Character at beginning of story.	Character at end of story.

	Character Name:
	Skills and Traits:
Character at beginning of story.	Character at end of story.

Name _____

Cape: A Story Timeline





Superhero Me:

Topic: *Creative writing, Art*

Purpose: *Comparing and contrasting concepts of “hero” and “superhero”
Applying labels of “hero” and “superhero” to student’s unique
talents in their everyday lives.*

Key Questions: *What is the difference between a hero and a superhero?
Are superheroes real?
How would you “superhero” yourself?*

Materials: *Writing paper
Blank or art paper
Pencils and erasers
Colored pencils or markers
Scissors
Small pictures of each student’s face
Glue*

Preparation: *4 Corners*

Tape up 4 signs, one in each corner (or in 4 separate areas of the room). The signs will each have different symbols and words on them:

Thinker (Brain), Watcher (Eyes), Speaker (Mouth), Doer (Hands).

Explain that each of us is unique. This means that there is no other person just like us in all the world, never has been in the past and will never be in the future. As a unique person, each of us has our own way of interacting with the world.

Invite suggestions of some ways people interact with the world. Write them on board as brainstorm if desired.

Show students signs depicting 4 basic ways people interact with their world.

Invite students to think for a few seconds about which one of these traits they would pick to best describes themselves.

At the count of 3, give them 10 seconds to go stand under the sign that matches their choice.

If you wish, give them another chance to change to another sign, since people have many ways to interact with their world.

Activity:

Once students are seated again, explain that superheroes are usually people who interact with their world using these same traits that are shown on the signs, but they do it in amazing huge ways.

Students will be invited to consider the trait signs they picked, and to use those traits to turn themselves into a superhero.

- 1. Cut out the picture of your face and glue it to the head area of your superhero*
- 2. Write down your "Hero skills" or the traits you picked during our 4 corners activity.*

3. *Now draw on Josie, Mae, and Akiko, and your imagination, to turn those into “Superhero skills.”*
4. *Create a superhero uniform for yourself*
5. *Lastly, describe a mission you could be sent on that would help other people, your community, or the world in which you would use your superhero skills.*

SUPERHERO ME!

Superhero name

Hero skills

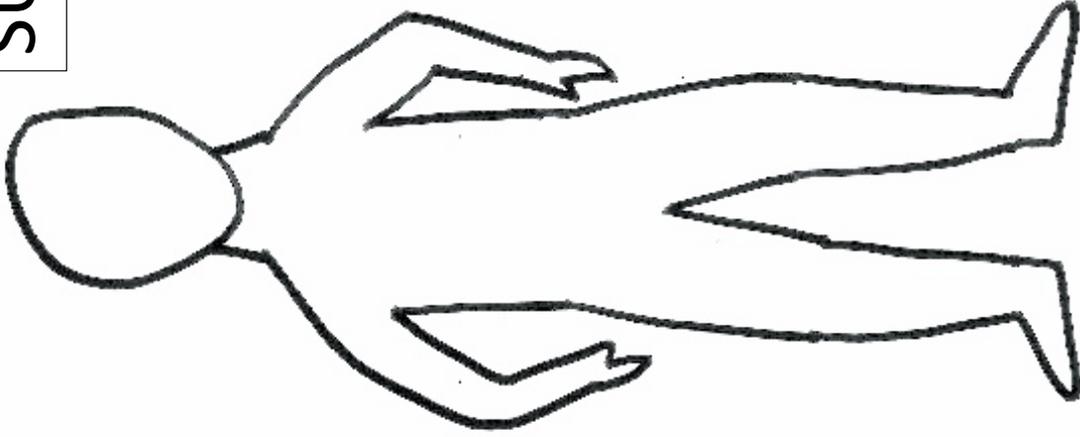
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Superhero skills

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



My mission:





Sifting Ciphers

Topic: Math, Logic

Purpose: Introduce students to codes and ciphers

Math connection: variables (algebra)

Key Questions: What is the difference between a code and a cipher?

How do you create codes and ciphers?

What can codes and ciphers be used for?

Materials: Code and cipher examples (paper/overhead/smartboard)

Paper

Pencils

Markers

Preparation: Codes and ciphers are part of CRYPTOGRAPHY.

CRYPTOGRAPHY comes from two Greek words: “Kryptos” meaning “Hidden” and “Graphe” meaning “to write.”

Many people confuse codes and ciphers, but they are actually two different things. Codes are a way to hide a message by changing whole words and phrases into other words or numbers. Ciphers are a way to hide a message by changing individual letters into numbers, other letters, or even shapes or drawings.

Activity: Students will practice using one or two well-known ciphers, and then see if they and their partner/group can make up their own.

Ciphers to Try

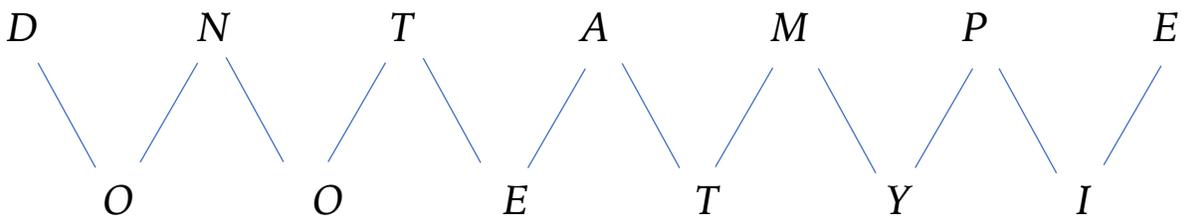
Rail Fence Cipher – These ciphers actually don't change the letters in your message, but instead move or “transpose” them.

1. Decide on a short sentence or phrase you want to send as a cipher.

Example: DO NOT EAT MY PIE

2. Write your sentence as 2 lines where every other letter is on top or on the bottom.

Example:



3. Put all the top letters together as a new word. Put all the bottom letters together as a new word. You made a cipher!

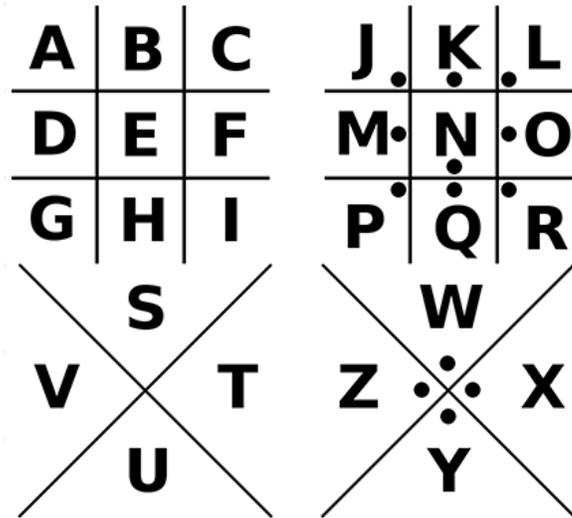
DNTAMPE OOETIYI

The Pigpen Cipher - This cipher is a little more challenging. It is also called the “Tic Tac Toe Cipher”.

1. Decide on a short sentence or phrase you want to send as a cipher.

Example: DO NOT EAT MY PIE

2. Then create 4 grids just like this. These grids hold the secret to your cipher.



(2)

3. Spell out your phrase or sentence using the lines and dots around each letter.

⌋⌋ □⌋< □⌋< ⌋⌋> ⌋⌋> ⌋⌋>

D O NOT EAT MY PIE

Follow Up -Have students in pairs or groups practice with these two types of ciphers.

-Have students work alone/in pairs/in small groups to create their own cipher.



Learning from the Past: World War II KWL Chart

Focus: Chapter 1 (Graphic)/whole book

Topic: Setting, History

“Cape” is a historical fantasy that blends fact and fiction. This means that amid the fictional characters created by the author (Josie, Mae, and Akiko), there are real-life figures from history.

Purpose: Access existing student knowledge about World War II, guide students to predict what they want or need to know, and then reflect upon what they’ve learned

Key questions: What do you know about World War II?

How did the war affect young people’s lives?

Who were Kay McNulty and Jean Jennings and why are they important? What were they working on?

What did the ENIAC launch?

Who were the Duke and Harry Sawyer, and what did they do?

Materials: KWL Charts (Know/Want or Need to find out/What I Learned)
Book
White board/chalkboard/smart board

Preparation:

1. Individual or partner read of Chapter 1 (Graphic)

2. **Brainstorm:** Whole group brainstorm/small group brainstorm

- a. What details do you see and read in Chapter 1 that tells us WHEN this story happens?
- b. Create a list or brainstorm chart on whiteboard/chalkboard/smartboard from the clues seen and read in Chapter 1 that point to when this story takes place.
- c. Guiding Hints: clothing, date on penny, style of bicycles, mention of Nazis and Hitler, price on comic book

3. **Activity: KWL Chart**

**Can be done as individual, partner, or small group activity*

- a. Introduce KWL Chart: We will begin this chart now and will add to it as we learn more about World War II from Josie, her family, and her friends.
- b. Fill out K column: What do you KNOW about World War II?
- c. Fill out W column: What do you WANT or NEED to know about World War II?

d. (Optional) Share and discuss your chart with a partner

e. Collect charts and return to them throughout the reading

4. Extension/Alternate Approach

Instead of individual charts, create a large class wall KWL chart. Have students work in groups to share what they know and predict what they'd like to/need to learn and then add their responses using post-its.



Writing Prompts/Ideas

Feeling powerful vs feeling powerless

Are superheroes real?

Why do people fight?

Some people act like bullies on the outside, but are they bullies on the inside?

Are secrets good or bad?

Compare and contrast: Newspapers vs the Internet



About the Author

Kate Hannigan

What does she write?

Kate writes fiction and nonfiction for young readers.

What are her favorite things to write about?

She especially loves digging up remarkable people from history and sharing their stories.

What is her superpower?

Kate's superpower seems to be parallel parking, but if she could choose, it would be teleportation.

Where is she from?

She lives in Chicago with her husband, three kids and one anxious Australian shepherd.

What other books has she written?

The Detective's Assistant is about America's first female detective.

A Lady Has the Floor tells the story of Belva Lockwood, the first woman on the ballot for president.



Sources & Links

Activities

Cryptography

<https://www.ahschools.us/cms/lib/MN01909485/Centricity/Domain/4557/Loads%20of%20Codes%20%20Cryptography%20Activities.pdf>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-in-Pigpen-Code>

Charts and Organizers

KWL Chart

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/k-w-l-charts>

Story Map

<https://cdn.thisreadingmama.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/new-story-map.pdf>

Fiction Structure

<https://cdn.thisreadingmama.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Fiction-Text-Structure-Retelling-Organizer.pdf>

https://mrswarnerarlington.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/0/0/6900648/_time_line_1.pdf

https://mrswarnerarlington.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/0/0/6900648/_venn_diagram_1.pdf

https://mrswarnerarlington.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/0/0/6900648/_figurative_language_auth_or_tools_organizer_1.pdf

Clarification Handouts

<https://cdn.thisreadingmama.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/fiction-text-structure.pdf>

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