

TEACHER'S GUIDE

# The Best in the World

*A serialized story for newspapers*



written by Marc Talbert

illustrated by Betsy James

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# Introduction

*The Best in the World* offers readers an opportunity to experience an original story and illustrations through the local newspaper. This humorous story shows what happens when youngsters take honesty and charity a little too lightly. The story was written by Marc Talbert and illustrated by Betsy James.

## Lesson Plans

This guide includes a lesson for each chapter of the story. The chapter lessons are divided into five parts:

**Just the Facts** are literal-level questions. Students will find the answer stated in one sentence in the chapter being examined.

**Between the Lines** questions require students to make connections between information that appears in two or more sentences.

**Let's Discuss** questions encourage students to think about what is happening in the story. One question invites students to make a prediction about what is going to happen in the next chapter.

**In the Real World** allows students to make connections between the events and topics in the chapter and the real world through newspaper activities.

**Vocabulary words** are identified in each chapter. Teachers may use instructional vocabulary activities as they choose, such as for identifying phonic elements, using root words and affixes, or determining meaning from context.

## Additional Instructional Activities

This guide includes several ideas for extended activities based on the story content.

## Games

This guide includes a crossword puzzle and a word search based on the vocabulary in the story.

## Acknowledgments

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Use The News Foundation seeks to develop educational projects that provide resources addressing human rights issues such as diversity, character education, health and nutrition, safety, disaster preparedness, the environment, and the elimination of prejudice. Founded in August 1998, the Foundation is a nonprofit benefit corporation that fosters partnerships with schools, Newspaper in Education programs and their business sponsors. For information, contact Dr. Betty L. Sullivan at (415) 826-3154 or via e-mail at BETTYSNIE@aol.com. Also, log on to [www.usethenews.com](http://www.usethenews.com).

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# The Great Idea

## Just the Facts

1. What book was Clay reading with great interest?
2. How many times had Clay sneezed in a row — a fact that he thought might be a record?
3. What item was blocking Nick's way as he ran away from Clay?

## Between the Lines

4. Why did Clay pull the book away from Nick?
5. Why did Nick try so hard to get possession of the book?
6. Who had the book after the big chase?



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## Let's Discuss

7. Why do you think Clay wouldn't share his book with his best friend?
8. Why did Nick say the book was about losers doing lame things?
9. Why do you think the boys want to make their own record book?
10. Make a prediction: What record do you think the boys will try?

## In the Real World

Find a newspaper story about someone who has done something very unusual. Draw a picture showing the person accomplishing the feat. Write several sentences describing the special accomplishment and explaining why the individual wanted to do it.

## VOCABULARY

- **cocked**, *adj*  
turned up, sticking up
- **descending**, *v*  
going down
- **lame**, *adj*  
considered stupid or not acceptable
- **lunged**, *v*  
suddenly reached forward
- **perturbed**, *adj*  
disturbed, angry
- **stingiest**, *adj*  
least willing to share things
- **wincing**, *v*  
pulled back involuntarily

# The Grave News

CHAPTER

2

## Just the Facts

1. What jellybean stunt did Nick suggest for a record?
2. What was Nick's sister's real name and nickname?
3. Why did Nick have to take care of his sister?

## Between the Lines

4. What was Clay referring to when he said they could see "how many of these puppies we can eat in a minute?"
5. What was the "mother thing to say" that made the boys groan?
6. What was Clay's plan for keeping most of the \$20 Nick's mother gave them for groceries?



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## Let's Discuss

7. How did Nick feel about taking care of his sister?
8. Do you think Clay was stealing when he took food items from his own house?
9. On the street, the boys saw that people were giving money a man holding a sign. Why did people give the man money?
10. Make a prediction: What is Clay's new idea?

## In the Real World

Collect comic strips that show how sisters and brothers act together. Collect comic strips that show friends doing things together. Then make a poster that says, "Just Like Us" at the top. On your poster, paste the comic strips that show how you do things with brothers, sisters or friends.

## VOCABULARY

- **catercorner**, *adj*  
on the diagonal street corner
- **cinch**, *n*  
something that is certain to happen
- **countered**, *v*  
responded in an opposing way
- **muttered**  
spoke with a low voice
- **squinted**, *v*  
looked with eyes partially closed

# Bloody Jeans and Begging

## Just the Facts

1. Who was leaving Clay's house just as the three children were arriving?
2. What was the condition of the jeans Clay pulled out from under his bed?
3. How much were Nick and Jazz going to charge for her joke?

## Between the Lines

4. Why did Clay feel he should get the credit for making the most money?
5. Why did Nick laugh at Jazz's joke?
6. What was Clay going to do with his torn, dirty clothes?



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## Let's Discuss

7. How well do you think Clay got along with his sister?
8. Why did Jazz call Clay a "big shot?"
9. Why do you think Nick planned to give people their money back if they didn't like Jazz's joke?
10. Make a prediction: Who could be coming up the stairs?

## In the Real World

Make a sign for Jazz by cutting out large letters from the newspapers. Paste your letters on a large piece of paper. Decorate your sign so it will get people's attention.

## VOCABULARY

- **contagious**, *adj*  
capable of being transmitted to another person, like a disease
- **exploded**, *v*  
spoke suddenly in a loud way
- **fetching**, *v*  
going after something to bring it back
- **huffed**, *v*  
said angrily
- **pantry**, *n*  
a closet or small room where food is stored
- **scoffing**, *v*  
making fun of something
- **swooped**, *v*  
moved in a large, sweeping motion