

## A Curriculum Guide to

### ***No Talking***

By Andrew Clements

#### **About the Book**

Keeping quiet at school has got to be a good thing, right? It turns out that, when taken to extremes, silence can cause all kinds of trouble. So when arch-nemeses Dave and Lynsey agree to a boys-against-girls challenge to keep silent for two days, Principal Hiatt must put a stop to it. But Dave, Lynsey, and the rest of Laketon Elementary's exceedingly noisy, argumentative fifth graders don't want to start talking again. Instead, they find themselves working together in a quiet act of civil disobedience. As the entire school joins the experiment, both adults and kids come to realize that, much more than mere noise, talking is a source of individual empowerment and dignity in Clements's intriguing, often humorous exploration of communication and group control.

*"No Talking is Clements's best school story since Frindle."* —*The New York Times Book Review*

#### **Prereading Activities**

The activities contained in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (SL.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (W.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (CCRA.R. 1-7, 10) (CCRA.W.3-8, 10) (CCRA.SL. 1, 3, 5) (CCRA.L.1-6)

1. The title of this book is *No Talking*. What does "no talking" mean? Have you ever been in trouble for talking? What were the consequences? Why do teachers want kids to stop talking? Brainstorm with your class times when it might be important to have no talking and why teachers want kids to be quiet.
2. The no-talking contest in this story is between the fifth-grade girls and the fifth-grade boys. Who do you think will win? Does the fact that you're a boy or girl affect your answer? Why do you think boys and girls sometimes don't get along? What contributes to not getting along? Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't get along with someone? What did you do to resolve it?
3. Read pages 100 – 101 aloud to help students understand stereotypes and discrimination. Brainstorm with the class popular stereotypes and discrimination issues. Discuss how they might be overcome and the problems associated with stereotypes and discrimination. Make a K-W-L chart (a chart that tracks what a student knows, wants to know, and has learned about a topic) about what kids know about stereotypes and discrimination and then compare the chart and student understanding after the story has been read.
4. Who is Gandhi? What might he have to do with no talking? Have students share what they know about Gandhi, and have them predict how he might be involved with this

story. As they read, have them keep journals on what they might think about any of Gandhi's theories and how they might be applied to their own lives.

5. Is it okay for girls and boys to be friends with each other? Why or why not? Give examples from your own experience to support your point of view. What do you think girls and boys being friends or enemies have to do with this story? Compare and contrast your answers before and after you have read the story.
6. When and where would it be hardest for you to go without talking? Home? School? Playground? List five places or times that would be hard for you. Rank them from hardest to easiest and post them in your classroom. How similar or different are everyone's challenges?

### **Discussion Questions**

The following discussion questions contained in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (RL.4 – 6.10) (RF.4 – 5.4, 5) (SL.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (W.4 – 6. 4, 5, 6) (CCRA.R. 1-7, 10) (CCRA.W.3-8, 10) (CCRA.SL.1, 3, 5) (CCRA.L.1-6)

1. Describe the contest that Dave and Lynsey made with each other. What are the rules, what are the exceptions? Have you ever been in a contest with boys against girls? What type of contest was it and what were the rules? How do you think the no-talking contest will affect the school and the students? Who do you think is going to win and why?
2. What is an honor system? Do you think this was a good plan for the fifth graders to use? What evidence do you see in the story that shows the students are following the honor system? Do you think they will be honest about not talking at home? How can you know?
3. Make a Venn diagram that shows the characteristics of Dave and Lynsey. What characteristics do they both have? Who is the protagonist in this story? Find examples from the story to support your choice. Label that person on your diagram with an example from the book.
4. Dave's fifth-grade class is known as "the Unshushables." What does this mean? What is the difference between talking and noise? Mrs. Hiatt, the principal, uses a bullhorn at lunchtime to try and quiet the students down. Why doesn't this work? What other strategies have Mrs. Hiatt and the other teachers tried? Make a chart showing each teacher and principal and the strategies they have tried over the years and the results.
5. Dave feels that when Mrs. Hiatt yells at him with the bullhorn, he is being bullied. Do you agree or disagree? What is a bully? Discuss how to deal with a bullying problem. Is there a difference if that bully is an adult or a student? Why or why not?
6. On your chart that has the teachers and no-talking strategies they have tried, add another column that includes their reactions to the quiet and what is going on. Include examples from the story that describes their actions or expressions.
7. If you are not able to talk, what are some other forms of communication that you can use? What did the students use in the story? Do you think that by communicating a different way that students were able to get their messages across effectively? Find examples in the story to support your answer.

8. The last chapter of *No Talking* is called “Winners.” Who are the winners of the contest? Are there any losers? What changed about the contest from when it first started? How did the contest change the feelings of the boys toward the girls and the girls towards the boys? Support your answers with examples from the story.
9. Andrew Clements writes many stories about school kids—their hopes, dreams, troubles, and talents. Make connections and compare and contrast the book *No Talking* with some of Clements’s other school stories: *The Landry News*, *The School Story*, *The Janitor’s Boy*, *A Week in the Woods*, *Frindle*, *Lost and Found*, etc. How are the plots, main ideas, characters, and settings the same? How are they different? Why do you think Andrew Clements is so popular and appealing for readers?

## **Activities**

The following activities contained in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (RL.4 – 6.10) (RF.4 – 5.4, 5) (RI.4 – 6.3) (RI.6.4) (SL.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (W.4 – 6.4, 5, 6) (CCRA.R.1-7, 10) (CCRA.W.3-8, 10) (CCRA.SL.1, 3, 5) (CCRA.L.1-6)

1. Figurative language plays a large role in many of Andrew Clements’s stories. Figurative language includes similes, metaphors, expressions, etc.
  - a. **Similes**
    - i. Even though she was sitting behind him at the next table, and even though the cafeteria was almost bursting with noise, Lynsey had a sharp voice, the kind that cuts like a hacksaw.
    - ii. So I pull my hands away like she’s holding a dead skunk or something, and I say, “You think I want that?”
  - b. **Metaphors**
    - i. There were the usual grunts of effort and screams of terror, and when three or four kids with red dodgeballs would silently go hunting for one player on the other team, it was sort of like watching a pack of wolves go after a lone caribou: A motion of the leader’s head, a movement toward the prey, and then, *Whack!, Whack! WHOMP!* – dead meat.
    - ii. She tried to look as casual as possible, tried to act like it was perfectly normal for the lunchroom to be stone silent except for the clattering of plates and the squeaking of sneakers on the waxed floor.
  - c. **Expressions**
    - i. Dave had gotten through the lunch line without a peep.
    - ii. And in his ignorant but creative young mind, an idea sparked to life.

Find other examples of figurative language and explain what the author is trying to show us. Be sure to include the page number.

2. If you were to have no talking for a day, what would be the most difficult part? Would it be harder to do no talking at school or at home? How would your parents react to the silence? Keep a journal of what you experience and feel as you go through your day. Or try no texting, no cell phone, no instant messaging for a day. Which would be harder for you and why?
3. Have students research the development of language. How do people learn to use language and understand all of its meanings? Have the class break into groups and make a list of ways to communicate without speaking. What role does sign language play in communication?
4. Mr. Burton uses the no-talking contest as a research project. What are some experiments he performed? What were the results? Write your answers using a “lab report” format:
  - a. Question: What do I want to find out?
  - b. Hypothesis: A prediction
  - c. Procedure: Steps I need to follow
  - d. Materials: What will I need?
  - e. Data table: Pieces of information you keep track of during the experiment
  - f. Observations: Use complete sentences to describe what you noticed during your experiment. Give specific details, not opinion.
5. Using your library and the Internet, research more about Gandhi and civil disobedience. Prepare a PowerPoint, Podcast (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/podcasts-nuts-bolts-creating-30311.html>), or Animoto (<http://animoto.com/>) about Gandhi and the lessons from his life that are at play in *No Talking*.
6. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. were very similar. Continuing your research, find out how they were similar and what they wanted to accomplish. Be prepared to share their obstacles and how they overcame them, what they had in common, how they approached the issues, and if they felt they accomplished what they set out to do.
7. From Mrs. Hiatt’s point of view, give an oral presentation to parents about the no-talking contest. Talk about the rules, the outcome, and how the experience changed your thoughts on teaching and discipline.
8. Try making up a class cumulative story using only three words per student. What do you notice about the words you use? Are they nouns, verbs, adjectives? Or try having a debate—pros and cons—using only three words per comment. Suggested ideas might include: school uniforms, soft-drink machines in schools, year-round school, homework, etc. What other activities could you do using only three words? What are some examples that you can think of where words might be better? Make a chart of the most

frequent words used in your class story and debates, and tell what part of speech they are.

9. Take the three-word concept further, and have students do an Internet search on a topic they are interested in. Using only three words in Google (or whatever search engine you use), have students record how many hits they get with the search. Have students use dictionaries [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com) and thesauruses [www.dictionary.reference.com](http://www.dictionary.reference.com) to refine their searches. Have a contest to see who can get the LEAST amount of hits. Discuss with kids why having fewer, not more, results is actually better when searching the Internet. Does this concept apply to *No talking*? Help students make the connections about keywords and the role they play when searching for or trying to communicate information.

### Writing Suggestions

1. The no-talking contest started out as a contest, but things changed for Dave and Lynsey. What were those changes and how do you know they happened? Is it better to win a contest or band together? What did Dave and Lynsey learn? Write a reflection on which you think is better and what influences you to feel that way.
2. Talk about the changes students learned from their contest and make a prediction for how it will affect them in the future. Write the next chapter in the story after the contest has ended.
3. The teachers held a meeting where they expressed mixed feelings about whether or not they should require the kids to talk or let the contest be. Which side do you agree with? Write an opinion piece on whether the teachers should stop the kids or let the contest continue. Be sure to include examples from the story to support your side.

### **No Talking Word Bank: Tier 2 Vocabulary**

([http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_A.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf) pg. 33)

conservation

courteous

civil disobedience

discrimination

disorderly

enlightening

experiment

illegal

ignorant

interjection

keen

maniacs

miracle

nudged

preliminary  
recruits  
rousing  
skirmish  
solitary  
stereotypes

stratospheric  
suspense  
tolerance  
tumult  
unauthorized  
vandalism

*This updated guide was written in 2014 by Sharon Haupt, District Librarian, San Luis Coastal Unified School District, San Luis Obispo, CA.*

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