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**Great Works**

Instructional Guides  
for Literature

# Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

Judith Viorst



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# How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and are exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages describe how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

## Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the book.

Before students begin reading, have them complete the *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to keep students' papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 58). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they read the book to what the characters discovered during the story.

## Pre-Reading Picture Walks

For each section in this literature guide, there are suggestions for how to introduce the text to students. Teachers share information in a visual format and ask students to evaluate the content. Students must use the information presented in the illustrations to discuss what they are about to read and make predictions about the sections.

# How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

## Analyzing the Literature

After you have read each section with students, hold a small-group or whole-class discussion. Provided on the teacher reference page for each section are leveled questions. The questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. These questions are focused on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the book with students.

## Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion. Before students write, you may want to allow them time to draw pictures related to the topic.

## Guided Close Reading

Within each section of this guide, it is suggested that you closely reread a portion of the text with your students. Page numbers are given, but since some versions of the books may have different page numbers, the sections to be reread are described by location as well. After rereading the section, there are a few text-dependent questions to be answered by students.

Working space has been provided to help students prepare for the group discussion. They should record their thoughts and ideas on the activity page and refer to it during your discussion. Rather than just taking notes, you may want to require students to write complete responses to the questions before discussing them with you.

Encourage students to read one question at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

## How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

### Guided Close Reading *(cont.)*

The generic open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- What words in the story support . . . ?
- What text helps you understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why \_\_\_\_ happens.
- Based on the events in the story, . . . ?
- Show me the part in the text that supports . . . .
- Use the text to tell why . . . .

### Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, or other curricular areas. These activities require higher-order thinking skills from students but also allow for creative thinking.

### Language Learning

A special section has been set aside to connect the literature to language conventions. Through these activities, students will have opportunities to practice the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

### Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing what the common story elements are in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, plot, and theme can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers begin discussing these elements in early childhood, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

In the story elements activities, students are asked to create work related to the characters, setting, or plot. Consider having students complete only one of these activities. If you give students a choice on this assignment, each student can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to him or her. Different intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

## Vocabulary Overview

Key words and phrases from this section are provided below with definitions and sentences about how the words are used in the story. Introduce and discuss these important vocabulary words with students. If you think these words or other words in the story warrant more time devoted to them, there are suggestions in the introduction for other vocabulary activities (page 5).

Word	Definition	Sentence about Text
<b>sweater</b>	a warm, knitted top	Alexander's <b>sweater</b> gets wet, so he can't wear it.
<b>terrible</b>	awful; upsetting	When he wakes up, Alexander thinks he will have a <b>terrible</b> day.
<b>horrible</b>	very bad; unpleasant	Alexander's day gets more <b>horrible</b> by the minute.
<b>Undercover Agent</b>	a spy; a person who works in a secret way to catch criminals or collect information	Nick finds a Junior <b>Undercover Agent</b> ring in his cereal.
<b>code</b>	a set of letters, numbers, or symbols used to secretly send messages to someone	Nick can use his <b>code</b> ring to figure out secret messages.
<b>Australia</b>	the only country that is also a continent; it lies in the Southern Hemisphere below the equator	Alexander thinks moving to <b>Australia</b> sounds like a good idea.
<b>car pool</b>	a group of people who ride together each day to school or work	Mrs. Gibson drives students in the <b>car pool</b> .
<b>scrunched</b>	squeezed together too tightly	Alexander is <b>scrunched</b> in the back seat of the car.
<b>smushed</b>	smashed or crushed into something	Alexander complains that he is being <b>smushed</b> , but no one listens.
<b>carsick</b>	feeling nauseated while riding in a car	Alexander says he will be <b>carsick</b> if he doesn't get a different seat in the car.

# Vocabulary Activity

**Directions:** Draw lines to complete the sentences.

## Sentence Beginnings

Nick looks in his cereal box

Alexander drops his **sweater** in the sink

Mrs. Gibson drives four children

Alexander says he is

The **terrible** day begins

## Sentence Endings

**smushed** in the back seat.

to school in a **car pool**.

as soon as Alexander wakes up.

and finds a Junior **Undercover Agent** code ring.

while the water is running.

**Directions:** Answer this question.


1. What does Alexander say would keep him from being carsick?

\_\_\_\_\_

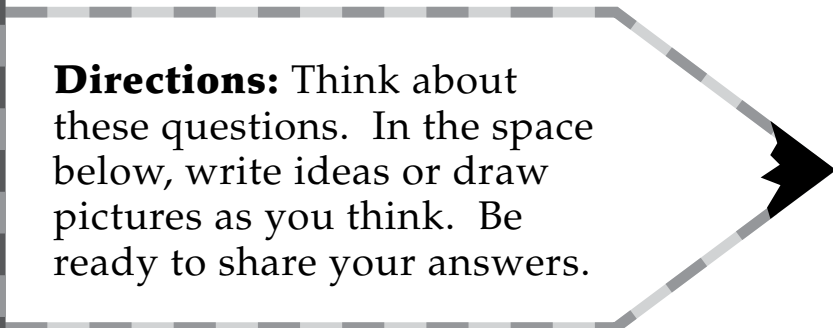
\_\_\_\_\_



## Guided Close Reading



Closely reread the first page of text in the book.



**Directions:** Think about these questions. In the space below, write ideas or draw pictures as you think. Be ready to share your answers.

- 
- 1 Use the text to describe the three bad things that happen to Alexander before breakfast.
- 
- 2 Which statement on the first page will be repeated on other pages of the book?
- 
- 3 The whole first page is written as a single sentence. Why did the author write it this way?
-

# Story Elements-Setting

**Directions:** Alexander says he wants to move to Australia. Australia is the only nation that is also a continent. Label six of the continents on the map below.

