big NATE

by LINCOLN PEIRCE

TEACHER'S GUIDE

For Students in Grades 3–7

Big Nate Provides a Clever Way to Sneak into Language Arts

Nate Wright is a wisecracking eleven-year-old who knows he's destined for greatness—he's a sixth-grade chess prodigy, a self-described genius, and the all-time record holder for detentions in school history. He's often in hot water with his teachers and classmates, but Nate's winning personality and can-do attitude always make him a big hit with readers. The school life of Nate, his pals, his rivals, and his long-suffering teachers are recounted in hilarious detail. Big Nate inspires students to read, write, analyze, discuss, investigate and create in the classroom. Yes, one rascally kid can do all that!

This guide pairs with any Big Nate book and includes:

- a variety of lessons
- clear instructions
- corresponding activity sheets
- extended reading and writing prompts

. . . making teaching a snap! Tagging along page by page with Big Nate, students will build vocabulary, analyze text and characters, hone essay writing skills, and engage in creative writing, classroom discussions, and group and individual projects.
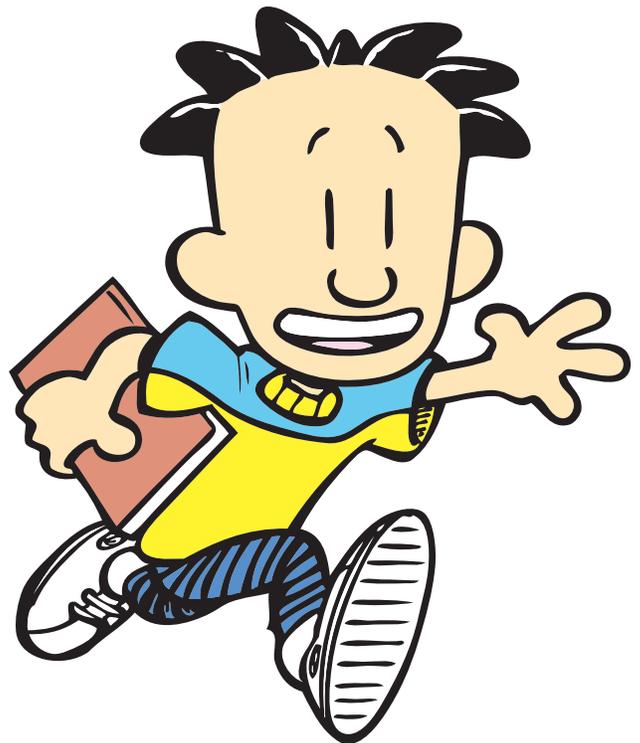
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Objective:
Student groups will select a book to read, participate in a group discussion, complete group presentation activities, and use the book as a springboard for individual creative writing exercises.

1) Collaborative Discussion

SAY WHAT?— Identifying Interesting Words and Phrases

Prereading:
Ask students to share some of the unique words and expressions they use with friends. For example, "so lit," "throw shade," "GOAT," "OMG." Ask students to note on the **Interesting Words and Phrases** (See activity sheet, p.10) activity sheet any interesting or unfamiliar words or expressions they come across while reading, and ask them to find definitions.

Post-Reading Discussion:

Ask students to share a favorite word or expression they found in their reading. Ask if any of these are new to most students? If so, were they able to guess the definition from the story context?

SCHOOL DAYS — Discussing Significance of a Setting

Almost all the action in the books happen in the same place: at school. Use this to have a discussion about setting.

1. How does the school setting relate to plot, theme, and character development?
2. Do students think the plot is realistic?
3. Does Nate like school? Do his friends? What do students think about school?
4. Do students understand the humor in the book's depiction of student/teacher relationships? Have students give examples of conversations that happen in the book that would probably not happen in real life.

2) Group Activity

DETENTION INVENTION
Character Analysis and Creative Assumptions

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to do the following:

- Nate is often given detention. What's more upsetting is when he is given a "lame" detention (like being late for class); he would prefer a "quality" detention. Have each group brain storm five to ten things that would result in a "quality" detention for Nate and present them to the class.

3) Creative Writing

SAME DIFFERENCE—Compare and Contrast Characters
Ask students to compare and contrast two of their favorite characters using the **Character Compare and Contrast** (See activity sheet, p.11) activity sheet.

WRITE ON — Writing a Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph
With the information students wrote in their Venn diagram activity sheet, have them write a compare-and-contrast paragraph using the prompts on the Writing a **Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph** (See activity sheet, p.112) activity sheet.

THROWING SHADE— Investigating Shades of Meaning
Students may choose words from their reading or select their own to fill out the **Shades of Meaning** (See activity sheet, p.13) activity sheet.

NOW HIRING — Character Analysis and Creative Assumptions
Nate is always claiming to be an expert on something (for example, the Commissioner of Nicknames and Dr. Love, an advice columnist). Have students choose another character and give them a suitable or outrageous "occupation," and write a short essay highlighting the reasons for their choice.

4) Art

ALL IN THE DETAILS — Designing a Strip Using Comic Elements

Have students flip through a Big Nate book to find examples of how cartoonists imply
expression through lettering and drawing styles. For example:

Thought bubbles — this shows someone is thinking, not talking.
Jagged edges — this shows that the person speaking is unhappy or angry.
Dashed lines — this indicates that a character is whispering.
Bold type, large letters — this shows that someone is shouting.

Challenge students to design a comic strip of their own using at least three of these elements.

LESSON PLAN 2:
English Language Arts
FOR GRADE LEVELS: 3–7

OBJECTIVE:
Student groups will select a book to read, participate in a group discussion, complete group presentation activities, and use the book as a springboard for individual creative writing exercises.

# 1) Reading and Discussion

Procedure:

BEFORE READING
- Take students on a quick book walk-through of a Big Nate book without reading the dialogue. Ask students what they think the book is about. If students have read other Big Nate titles, ask them to share what they know about the characters and settings.

- Ask students to point out who they think the main characters are in the comic, describe those characters, and make predictions about the characters based on visual cues.

- Introduce the concept of character motivation. Motivation is the reason a character does something (what they want, need, think, or feel that makes them act). For example, if a character steals food, the motivation could be hunger, greed, or jealousy. Ask students what some other motivations for stealing food might be.

- Ask students to share some character actions that they remember from books they have read and discuss the motivations of the characters who performed those actions.

DURING READING
- Tell students that their purpose for reading this book is to observe the characters' actions and think about their motivations for those actions. What do the characters want, need, think, or feel that makes them act?

AFTER READING
- Have students select pages and discuss their thoughts about the characters' motivations. What motivated different characters to act or say something?

- Give students copies of the Character Actions and Motivations worksheet. Have them select four comics from a book in which a character performs some sort of action. In the chart on their worksheets, have students draw and write about the actions and motivations of the characters. Remind students that in comics, information comes from the words as well as the pictures (and the way they work together), so they should use information from both the drawings and the dialogue.
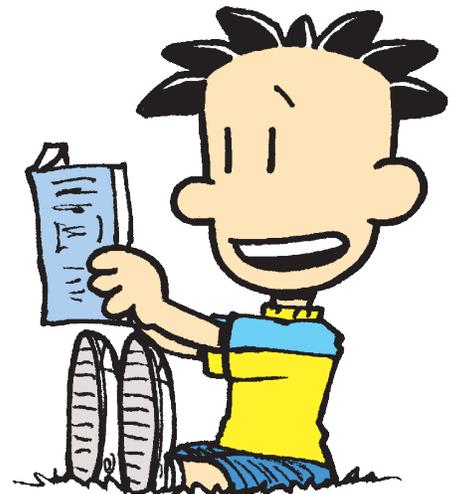
- Tell students that they will now be starring in their own four-panel comics. They should think of situations that they have been in or that they might find themselves in and show how their motivations create actions. Using the **Motivate to Action** (See activity sheet, p.15) activity sheet, have each student fill in the situation, action, and motivation that they will use.

- Point out to students that when they are creating their comics, they don't need to show everything that happens. They can show what happens before and after in a way that leads the reader to figure out the action in between.

- Give students some time to find examples of action between panels in a book and share them with the class.

- Point out that cartoonist Lincoln Peirce shows action by using colored lines, blurry images, a burst of short lines, a curved line around a head, etc.

- Tell students that when they are creating their own comics, they can show action within a panel by using motion lines and repeated or blurred images.

- Give students some time to find other examples of action within panels in a book and share them with the class.

- Feeling Symbols: Tell students that comics often use symbols to show characters' feelings. For example, a black cloud over a character's head, sweat drops, lines over a character's head, etc.

- Give students some time to find other examples of feeling symbols in the book and share them with the class.
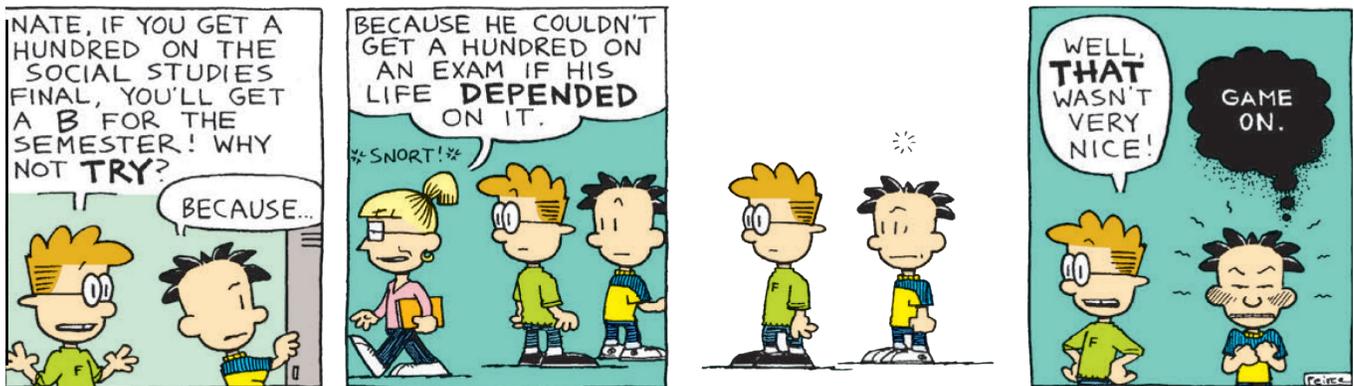
2) Writing

WHAT'S GOING ON?—Descriptive Writing

Have each student write a paragraph about the situation depicted in their **Motivate to Action!** comic. Each student should describe the situation, the action they took, and the motivation that spurred them to action. Assess students' writing using the formative or summative assessments that you usually use for writing, and analyze students' comics and paragraphs to assess their understanding of character action and motivation.

3) Art

CREATE A COMIC

Give students time to sketch out first drafts of their comics in pencil using the **Motivate to Action! Comic** (See activity sheet, p.15) activity sheet. Remind them that a comic is a series of pictures that tell a story in sequence, not just four unrelated pictures. They should use a combination of pictures and words to tell the whole story. Their comics must show the situations and the actions they took and should allow the reader to figure out what the motivations were for the actions.

- Once students have created their drafts, have each of them prepare a piece of paper with their name and a two-column chart with the headings "Action" and "Motivation." Then have students place their completed comics on their tables or desks, along with the prepared chart. Have students circulate around the room and read one another's comics. For each comic, students should write on the chart what the action is and what they think the motivation was for the action. This will provide students with authentic feedback on how well their comic conveys their intended messages.

- Have students revise their comic drafts based on the feedback they received, and then provide colored pencils, markers, or other art supplies for students to create final versions.

ACTING UP—Character Role-Play
- Give students an opportunity to act out the scenarios they created in their comics. Remind students that they need to show both the actions they took and their motivations for those actions. Give students time to create props or costumes, if desired, and to plan and rehearse their performances. Let students present their skits and have the class discuss the motivations behind each action.
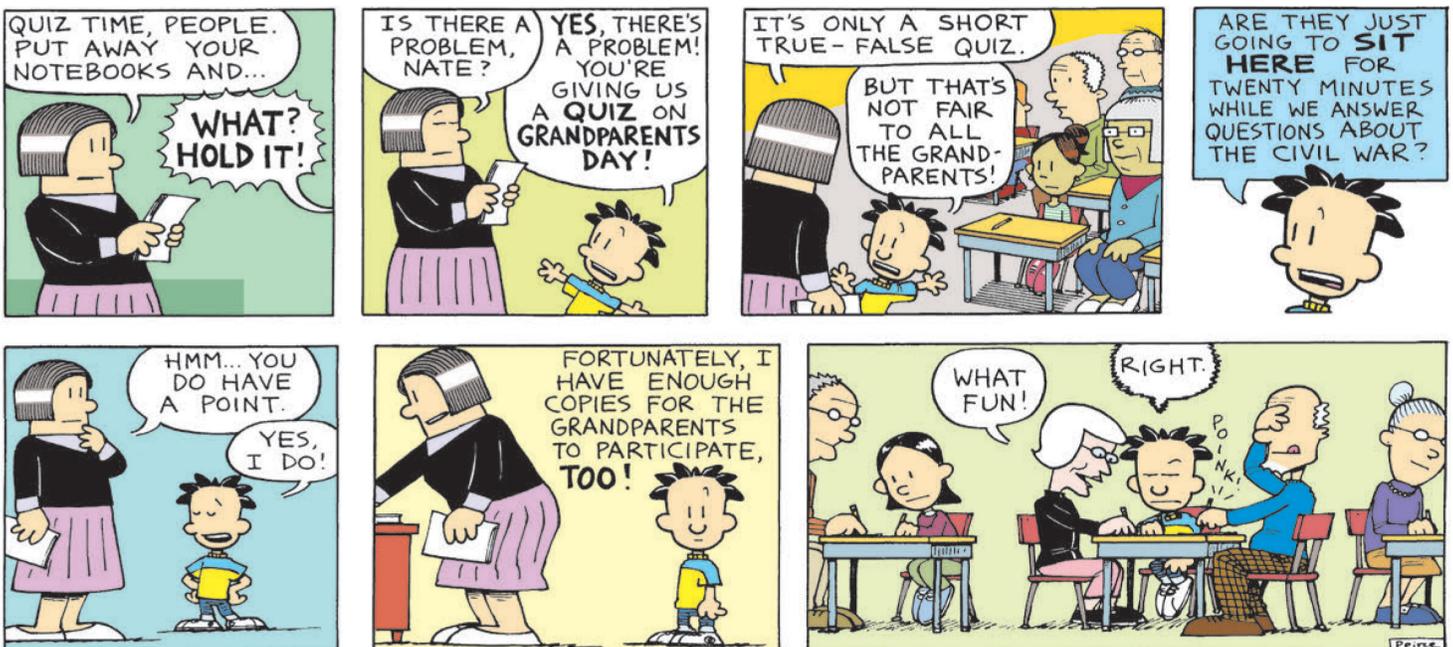
Activity Sheets

LESSON 1:
- Interesting Words and Phrases
- Character Compare and Contrast
- Writing a Compare-and-Contrast Essay
- Shades of Meaning

LESSON 2:
- Character Actions and Motivations
- Motivate to Action! Comic

INTERESTING WORDS AND PHRASES

Directions: As you read *Big Nate: Welcome to My World*, write down any interesting word choices that you find. Look for idioms, adjectives, and verbs that are unusual or that you find intriguing. Write the meaning of each word or phrase.

Idiom	Meaning

Adjective	Meaning

Verb	Meaning

CHARACTER COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Directions: Write the names of your two favorite characters in the blanks. In the circle surrounding the first character's name, write some things that make that character unique. Repeat this step in the circle surrounding the second character's name. In the middle, write things that both characters have in common. Be sure to list all kinds of characteristics: physical traits, actions, feelings, things they say, relationships with other characters, etc.

_____
Character

_____
Character
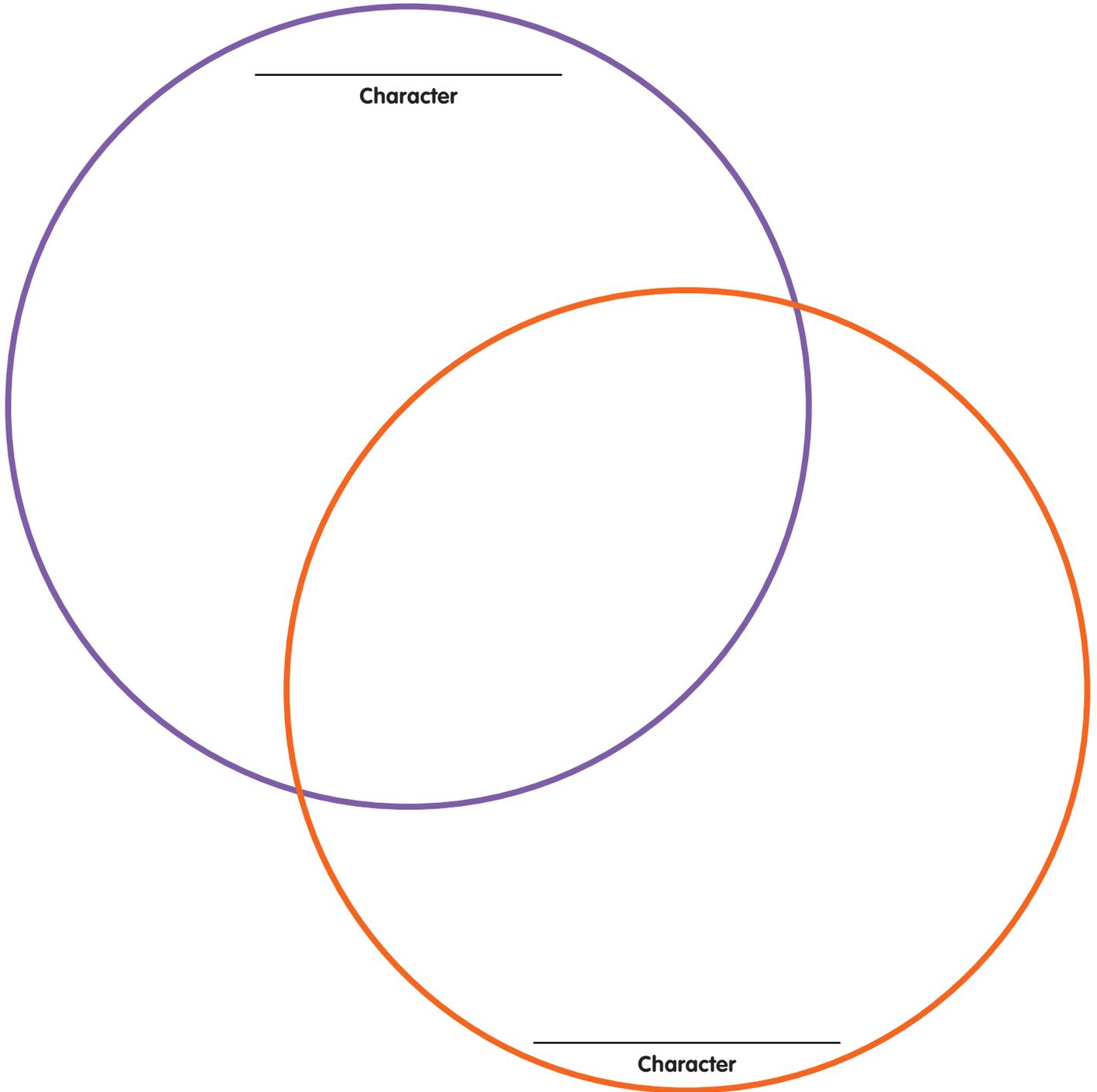
WRITING A COMPARE-AND-CONTRAST PARAGRAPH

Directions: Use the information in your Venn diagram to write a compare-and-contrast paragraph about the two characters you chose. You can use the guide below to write your paragraph. Be sure to include:

* Details about the similarities and/or differences
* Signal words or phrases to emphasize the similarities and differences:

Alike: *alike, same as, similar to, equally, in common, as well as, both, also*

Different: *but, while, different from, however, although, instead of, on the other hand*

1. Write a topic sentence that names the two characters and tells whether they are alike, different, or both.

2. Write a sentence that compares and/or contrasts the characters' physical traits.

3. Write a sentence that compares and/or contrasts the characters' personality traits.

4. Write a sentence that compares and/or contrasts the characters' relationships with other characters.

5. Write a concluding sentence that retells the major similarities and differences of the characters.

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SHADES OF MEANING

Directions: Choose a pair of interesting words that are antonyms. They can be verbs, such as *adore* and *despise*, or adjectives, such as *vigilant* and *careless*. Write one word at each end of the line. In between, write words that gradually shift in meaning, creating a gradient of shades of meaning from one word to the other.

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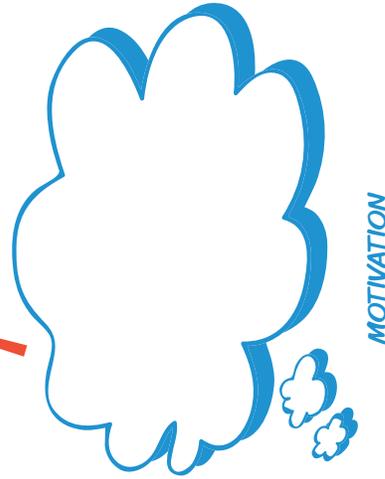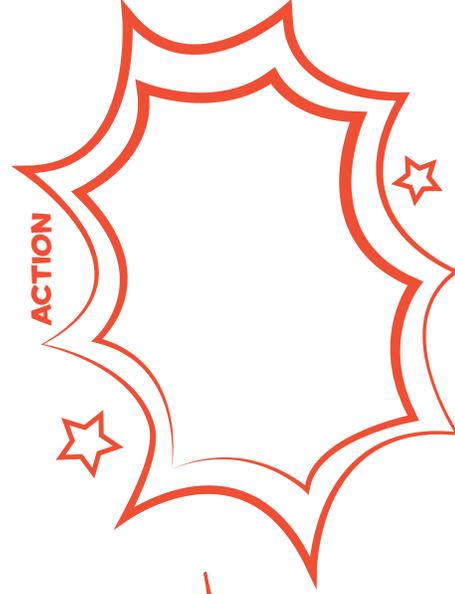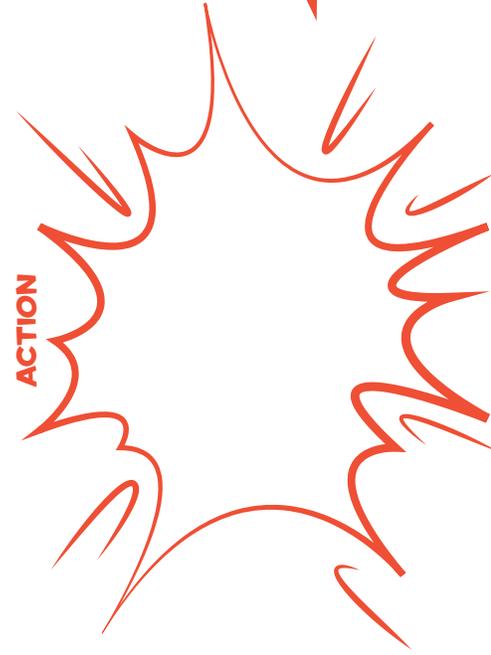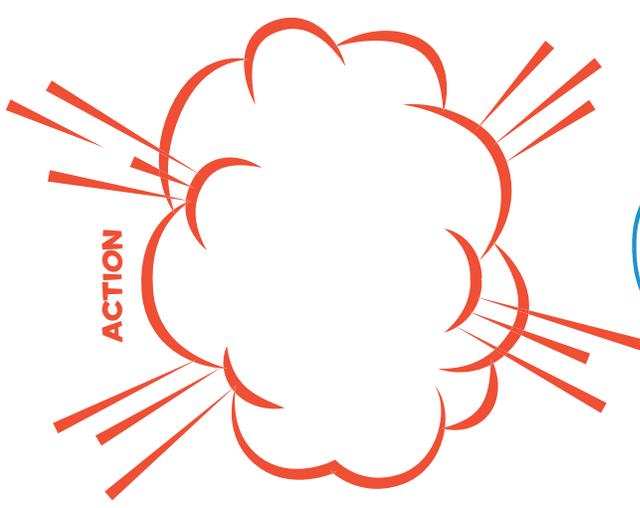
Character ACTIONS and MOTIVATIONS

Names: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Choose three comics from the book in which a character performs an action. For each comic, write the page number and the name of the character. In each "Action" section, write and draw what the character does in the comic (action). Then, in the "Motivation" section, write and draw what you think the character wanted, needed, thought, or felt that caused him or her to make those choices (motivation).

1. Page number: _____ Character: _____

ACTION

MOTIVATION

2. Page number: _____ Character: _____

ACTION

MOTIVATION

2. Page number: _____ Character: _____

ACTION

MOTIVATION

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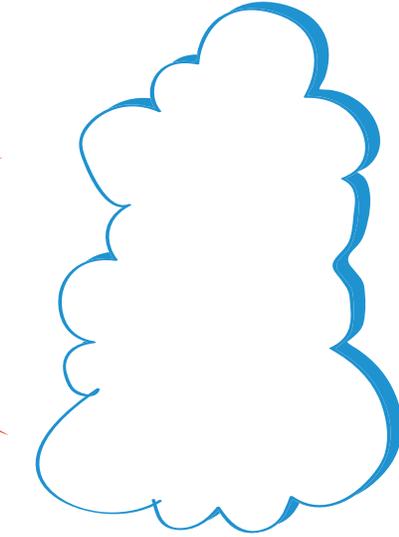
MOTIVATE to ACTION! Comic

Name: _____   Date: _____

Directions: Think of a situation in your life in which you might have to make a choice about how to behave. What action would you take? What would your motivation be for taking that action?

My Situation: _____

My Action: _____

My Motivation: _____

Using the comic frame below, sketch out your idea for a comic about the situation starring YOU. Be creative in your use of Panel-to-Panel action, within-Panel action, and feeling symbols—and make sure that your comic is clear and easy to read.

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EXTENDED READING AND WRITING:
FOR GRADE LEVELS: 3–5

- Students will identify character actions and motivations in a Big Nate book of their choice.
- Students will create autobiographical four-panel comics based on real-life situations in which they show both action and motivation.
- Students will observe and discuss ways to convey action and feeling in comics and use what they learn in creating their own comics.

SECTIONS:

1. Third Grade Extended Reading and Writing
2. Fourth Grade Extended Reading and Writing
3. Fifth Grade Extended Reading and Writing

MATERIALS:
- Copies of Big Nate books
- Character Actions and Motivations worksheet
- Motivate to Action! Comic worksheet
- Pencils
- Colored pencils, markers, or other art supplies

Grade 3
READING
- Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- 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).

WRITING
With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

Grade 4
READING
- Identify a character, setting, or event in the book that has specific details revealed in both text and images (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, and/or actions).
- 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).

WRITING
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Grade 5

READING

- As students read, have them look for two or more characters, settings, or event in the story that can be compared and contrasted with specific details found in both the text and images.
- 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).
- 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).

WRITING

- Have students write a compare and contrast paragraph using specific details found in their reading.