

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Class Clown

by

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Book Information

Johanna Hurwitz, Class Clown
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Lucas Cott, the class clown, wants to become the perfect student but finds it hard to change his ways.

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Main Characters

Lucas Cott the principal character in the story, considered the class clown of the third grade, who tries to change his mischievous ways

Mr. and Mrs. Cott Lucas's parents, who struggle to keep Lucas focused on trying to behave better in school, and with raising two-year-old twins

Mrs. Hockaday Lucas's teacher who sees he has a lot of potential and considers him one of her smartest students

Vocabulary

aptitude a natural ability or talent
mime a performer who can tell a story by using his/her body and not speaking
obstreperous resisting control in a noisy manner
rambunctious wild, unruly
tonsillitis inflammation or soreness of the tonsils
vandalize to willfully destroy property

Synopsis

Third grader Lucas Cott is one of the smartest students in his class. However, he is always getting into trouble. Cricket Kaufman, who is practicing to become a lawyer, spies on him and tells his teacher,

Mrs. Hockaday, when he's being naughty, but Lucas isn't afraid of her!

Lucas likes to make everyone laugh and has a reputation for being a real clown. He often doesn't finish his homework, and sometimes his teacher sends notes home to his parents about his behavior. His mom and dad think he can try harder, so Lucas does his best to learn to control himself, but things often get out of hand. When he brings a huge bag of leaves to school for an assignment, the bag opens up and creates a leaf whirlwind in the classroom. He is, however, helpful when using his wrestling skills to hold his twin brothers in a headlock so that Tony, the barber, can cut their hair.

Lucas enjoys being the class clown until the day Mrs. Hockaday assigns him to be a clown for the third grade minicircus. All of a sudden, being a clown seems like too much work. Lucas gets the chance to prove he has changed his ways when he takes over as the circus ringmaster. At the end of the school year, Lucas receives an award for the most improved conduct.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

What do you think motivates Lucas to bring a big bag of leaves to school?

He told Mrs. Hockaday he would bring more leaves than anyone else, and he wants to prove he was telling the truth. He also wants to see Cricket's face when he surprises everyone with his leaves. It might be suggested he wants to impress her.

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Literary Analysis

How did Lucas's attitude about his behavior change during the story?

Lucas begins to realize being a clown isn't always fun, especially when it becomes an assignment. He wants to have an important job in the minicircus and knows he can do a good job as ringmaster. He wants to prove he can be serious.

Inferential Comprehension

Compare Lucas and Cricket. How are they similar? How are they different?

Lucas doesn't take school as seriously as Cricket. He doesn't follow the rules and often acts out in class. Cricket is serious, raises her hand in class, and tries to follow the rules. Both are in the third grade, are smart, and want to be the center of attention.

Constructing Meaning

Have you ever acted out in class? Are you more like Lucas or Cricket? Would you rather be a clown or ringmaster in a circus? Why?

Answers will vary.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The story takes place mainly in Lucas's third grade classroom. Allow students to plan their own classrooms. If they could decorate a teacher's classroom, how would they do it? Would they use a seating chart? Have students pretend to be teacher for a day. What classes would they have? What supplies would the students need? How would they decorate the walls, desks, door? Is it more important to be a fun teacher or a strict one? Do they think a teacher's job is a difficult or easy one?

Understanding Literary Features One recurring theme throughout the story is how difficult change can be. In small groups, allow students to prepare a skit in which they act out one of the scenes from the book. Students could choose a scene where Lucas gets into trouble and then rewrite

the scene so that Lucas and Cricket switch roles. Or they might recreate the minicircus and place all the major characters in a circus role they might not choose for themselves, for example, Mrs. Hockaday as a clown.

Understanding Characterization Lucas often mentions what he wants to be when he grows up. He talks about being an astronaut, a wrestler, and an actor. Have the students discuss the career they think Lucas will finally choose. Will he continue to be a clown as an adult? Will his humor and energy help him more in certain careers? What might they be? Help students name some other characteristics of Lucas and what career path they might benefit.

Understanding the Author's Craft Have students imagine Lucas's story as a daily journal and take one week to prepare a journal entry detailing the day at school. What would be included? As part of the journal, students should include how they behaved during the day. Did they call out in class or make fun of any classmates? Did they listen to the teacher? What good behaviors did they have? Did they complete all the homework?