

Frindle
by
Andrew Clements

Book Information

Andrew Clements, Frindle
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Book Level: 5.4
Interest Level: MG

When Nick Allen decides to turn his fifth-grade teacher's love of the dictionary around on her, he cleverly invents a new word and begins a chain of events that quickly moves beyond his control.

Award: Christopher Award; State Award; Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

Topics: Community Life, School; Humor/Funny, Funny; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Power Lessons AR, Grade 4; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 6-8; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5

Main Characters

Alice Lunderson the TV reporter who interviews the Allen family for national television

Bud Lawrence a local businessman who capitalizes on Nick's new word

Janet Fisk Nick's schoolmate who is the first to hear the word <l>frindle</l>

Judy Morgan a local newspaper reporter who breaks the <l>frindle</l> story

Mr. Allen Nick's father, who does not want to be bothered with the fuss of controversy and fame

Mrs. Allen Nick's supportive mother

Mrs. Granger the infamous Language Arts teacher who inspires Nick to create a new word

Nick Allen a fifth-grade boy who creates a new word and an uproar in his community

Vocabulary

circular a newspaper or magazine

fascinating spellbinding, interesting

preposition a connecting word that shows a relationship in a sentence

vocabulary a list of words and phrases of a language

Synopsis

Nick Allen is about to enter the fifth grade at Lincoln Elementary School in Westfield, New Hampshire. He and his other classmates are nervous about having Mrs. Granger as their Language Arts teacher. Mrs. Granger is infamous for her vocabulary tests and high expectations. Nick, a notorious class-time-waster, tries to prevent Mrs. Granger from assigning homework on the first day of class by asking her about dictionaries. Sensing Nick's scheme, Mrs. Granger assigns him the duty of preparing an oral report on dictionaries to be presented the next day. That night Nick laboriously prepares his oral report, but also devises a grand plan for Mrs. Granger.

The next day, Nick is very nervous. His report begins with an uneasy start, but after the first eighteen minutes, Nick becomes convinced his plan will work. He intends to make his report as long as possible to become the greatest "time-waster" ever. Although his report lasts for more than half the period, his effort fails. Worse yet, Mrs. Granger treats him as if he is the teacher's pet. Sensing his reputation is in great danger, Nick asks Mrs. Granger another time-waster question about how words get their meaning. Mrs. Granger states that people decide and agree on the meaning of words. The class period ends, and Nick realizes while he may not have stopped Mrs. Granger, he has managed to slow her down.

Keeping in mind what Mrs. Granger said about the origins of words, Nick creates a new word. As he and his friend Janet walk home from school one day, Nick picks up a pen Janet finds and calls it a *frindle*. Janet is surprised, and Nick informs her that she will learn the meaning of the new word soon. Eventually the word *frindle* becomes the most popular word in school. Mrs. Granger, seemingly annoyed with the new word and the disruption it

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brings, attempts to punish those who use it. She forces the users to write a sentence one hundred times. When this does not work, the school officials become exasperated. Mrs. Granger calls a meeting with Nick. At this meeting, Mrs. Granger asks Nick to sign a sealed envelope that he will receive when the "war" is over.

Meanwhile, Nick's word catches on in the rest of the community. Bud Lawrence, a local businessman, capitalizes on the word and creates and sells pens with the word *frindle* printed on them. When Bud's lawyer informs him that the word belongs to Nick, Bud persuades Mr. Allen to allow him to sell the products and, in turn, he will give Nick a share of the profits.

As *frindle* catches on in the community, Westfield becomes a place of interest to the rest of the country. Judy Morgan, a local newspaper reporter, does a story on the new word. When Judy's story is published, Alice Lunderson, a TV reporter, notices the story and travels to Westfield. Alice does a story about the word and its creator, which sends Nick into the circuit of television talk shows. Nick's fame and popularity eventually wears him out, and he becomes quiet and reserved for the remainder of the year.

The story wraps up with Nick as a junior in college. After giving some of his wealth to his family members, Nick buys himself a new computer and a new bike. In November, he receives a package from Mrs. Granger that contains a new dictionary with the word *frindle* in it, Mrs. Granger's old pen with a note attached that says *frindle*, and a letter. The letter, written years before by Mrs. Granger, in the envelope signed by fifth-grade Nick, explained her role at the beginning of the *frindle* events. In it she confesses she must play the villain, and she is very excited to see how the events unfold. The letter surprises Nick. He had believed she did not support his creation. On Christmas Day, Mrs. Granger opens her door to find a letter from the school superintendent that states a trust fund has been created in her name. Mrs. Granger also finds a gold pen engraved with the words, "This object belongs

to Mrs. Lorelei Granger, and may she call it any name she chooses. -- With love from Nicholas Allen."

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Why do you think Nick chooses the word *frindle* in place of the word pen?

Nick seems to come up with the word frindle after very little thought. The word just comes to him. Perhaps he likes the way it sounds, and he wants the silliness of the word to show the concept that people create words.

Literary Analysis

The author of this story, Andrew Clements, was a teacher at one time. Why do you think he chose to write this book?

Perhaps Clements chose to write this book because of his experiences while he was teaching. Perhaps he had a student like Nick. This book seems to reflect the desire of many teachers to be a positive influence on their students. Nick does not realize Mrs. Granger's effect on him right away, but he understands it eventually.

Inferential Comprehension

If this story were to continue, do you think Nick will create more words that are unusual? Why or why not?

The answers to this question will vary. At the end of the book, Nick seems to be more concerned with causes for the common good, such as improving the school cafeteria food. Through these experiences, Nick learns that he, as an individual, can accomplish things. It is likely that his future projects will be more mature in nature and larger in scope.

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Constructing Meaning

According to the book, Nick and his classmates are somewhat afraid of Mrs. Granger. She has a reputation for expecting a lot from her students. Have you ever been afraid to have a certain teacher? Why? Did you find that your fears were justified, or did the teacher surprise you?

The answers to this question will vary. Many students will have encountered a teacher whose reputation or demeanor frightened them. It seems as if every school has at least one teacher who is infamous for holding exceptionally high standards. Students are often surprised to discover, however, that these teachers can have a profound and lasting effect on their study habits, schoolwork, attitude, and future success.

created. Next, have them create their own short dictionary of twenty-five vocabulary words from the story such as circular, fascinating, preposition, lawsuit, remarkable, vocabulary, degree, drama, and villain. They should use correct definitions that are phrased in their own words.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting This story takes place in Westfield, New Hampshire. Ask your students to research New Hampshire. Then, have them create a map of the state and write a short report on one of the many tourist attractions in the state. They could choose from such attractions as the Old Man of the Mountains, Wentworth By The Sea Hotel, covered bridges, the Isles of Shoals, whale watching, Hampton Beach, Odiome Point, Franconia Notch State Park, or the Flume.

Recognizing Feelings Nick becomes famous for inventing the word *frindle*. He even appears on the *Late Show with David Letterman*. Ask your students to imagine themselves in Nick's place. Have them write a one-page diary response that describes how it would feel to become famous for inventing a new word or a new product.

Identifying Reading Strategies Nick creates a word that is quickly added to everyday language. Ask your students to create five new words to replace existing words. Then, ask your students to list the words, their definitions, and a sentence using each word.

Responding to Literature Nick gives an oral report on dictionaries in Mrs. Granger's class. Ask your students to research how dictionaries are