



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary
(ages 9–12)

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PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and Sarah
Mayor Cox

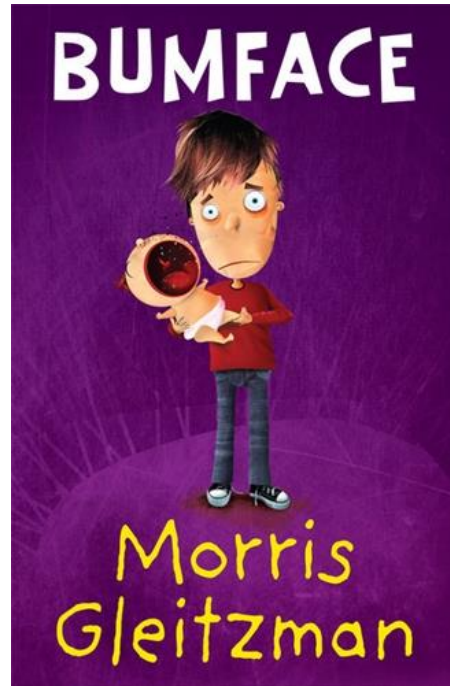
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Bumface Morris Gleitzman

PLOT SUMMARY

Bumface is the story of a kid who's having to lead a far more adult life than he really wants to. He dreams of being bold, brave, wild and free like the pirates in the stories he tells his younger brother and sister. Instead he has to change nappies and wipe food off walls. It's no wonder that he's so keen to stop his mum from having another baby. And as if that's not enough, he also has to find a way to help his friend Rindi avoid an arranged marriage, not to mention convincing his teacher to let him be in the school play.

The main characters in the story, Angus and Rindi are in the last years of primary school. As such the story is targeted at upper primary and lower secondary school students. However the many layers of plot and sub-plot, theme and sub-text also lend themselves to study with middle secondary school students. This book will have special appeal to teachers working with reluctant readers at an older level, and those working with students learning English as a Second Language. The underlying messages of the story are quite sophisticated, and older readers will not find the content of this novel patronising.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morris Gleitzman grew up in England and came to Australia when he was sixteen. After university he worked for ten years as a screenwriter. Then he had a wonderful experience. He wrote a novel for young people. Now, after 38 books, he's one of Australia's most popular children's authors.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

Survey the class to find out which of Morris Gleitzman's books they have already read. Collate this into a class list.

1. How would you describe Gleitzman's writing style? Can you categorise Gleitzman's style? Consider aspects such as characters, plots, themes, genre, literary style.
2. This may lead on to a more comprehensive author study (see: After Reading the Novel – Author Study).
3. What do you expect from the title? Why do you think Gleitzman has used such a title?
4. Read the blurb. Does this change your predictions about the book? If so, how?

One of the literary devices Gleitzman uses in *Bumface* is to make readers question their predictions and reactions. The reader is led one way when in fact the plot is going another way thus resulting in a reversal of expectations. To demonstrate this device explain that you are going to read the first page of the novel in three sections. After each part you will stop reading and ask some questions. Reassure your students that you will not spoil the reading by stopping constantly. This activity can be done after the initial reading, especially if your students are reading the novel for themselves.

Read section 1. "‘Angus Solomon,’ sighed Ms Lowry. ‘Is that a penis you’ve drawn in your exercise book?’" (p 3)

- How do you feel after reading this? Why do you think Gleitzman has used this as the opening line for his novel? What is the impact of this sentence on the reader?

Read section 2. "Angus jumped, startled, and remembered where he was. Ms Lowry was standing next to his desk, staring down at the page. Other kids were sniggering. Angus felt his mouth go dry and his heart speed up. For a second he thought about lying. He decided not to." (p 3)

- What are your immediate impressions of Angus? How do you think Angus is feeling? What could he have said to cover up his picture? Why do you think he decided not to lie? What will happen next?

Read section 3. "‘No, Miss,’ he admitted, ‘it’s a submarine.’ Ms Lowry nodded grimly. ‘I thought as much,’ she said. ‘Now stop wasting time and draw a penis like I asked you to.’ She pointed to the one she’d drawn on the blackboard." (p 3)

- In this section Gleitzman has reversed the reader's expectations. Why do you think he does this? What is your response as a reader?

CLOSE READING

Chapter 1

- What is it about the opening paragraph that grabs the reader immediately? Why do you think Morris Gleitzman wrote in such a way?
- What can you deduce about the main character Angus and others such as Miss Lowry and Russell Hinch as this chapter unfolds?

Chapter 2

- Explain Angus' relationships with his siblings. What does he do for them and how do they appear to feel about him?
- Why does Angus play the family role he does?

Chapter 3

- Contrast the TV role Angus' mother plays with the 'mother role' played by Angus at home. What is so different? Is there anything similar?
- How does Angus explain her absence to his younger siblings?
- How do you think he really feels about his Mum?

Chapter 4

- What are your impressions of Angus' father?
- Does Angus like being referred to as 'My Mr Reliable'? Give reasons for your answer.
- How do you feel at this stage of the story about the degree of maturity displayed by the adults and shown by the children?

Chapter 5

- What is keeping Angus motivated?
- Discuss Angus' complaint – 'When a kid has an idea and tells it to a grown-up, the grown-up takes over.' Do you agree?
- What is so ironic about Miss Lowry's comment to Angus? – 'What you need to do, young man, is grow up.'
- Why do you think adults misjudge Angus?



Chapter 6

- What qualities do each of the dads (Numbers 1, 2 and 3) display?
- How do you think each child feels about his/her father?

Chapter 7

- Describe the range of emotions Angus goes through in this chapter as he comes to terms with giving up something so important to him.
- Why do you think he won't tell the truth about his situation – to Miss Lowry and others?

Chapter 8

- What becomes Angus' focus in this chapter?
- What is it he fears and why?

Chapter 10

- What sorts of reactions and responses does Angus get from the adults he turns to for help?
- 'Sometimes it was a real pain being a parent.' What leads Angus to this conclusion?

Chapter 11

- Why is Angus suspicious of Rindi?
- How does Angus feel about having a go on the rope – before he attempts it and afterwards? What does this tell you about his life?
- What do you think Rindi's situation is?

Chapter 12

- Apart from innocently stating the truth about everything (whether appropriate or not!), Leo seems very perceptive for a small boy. Skim back over this chapter and what you have read so far to find examples of this. Use the text to support your views in building a picture of Leo's character. What role do you think he plays in the story?

Chapter 13

- Miss Lowry advises Angus that 'part of growing up is doing things you don't really want to do.' What sorts of things does Angus already do that suggest he is already grown up?
- Can you think of experiences in your own life where this advice seems relevant?
- What do we find out about Rindi's situation and her fate?

Chapter 14

- How does Angus' mum respond to his efforts to tell her about Rindi?

- What theme seems to be recurring in Morris Gleitzman's portrayal of the adults in Angus' life?

Chapter 15

- Why is it such a struggle for Rindi to come to terms with what her parents want her to do?
- What do you think about the actions of Rindi's parents?

Chapter 16

- What was Angus and Rindi's plan in bringing their families together?
- Explain the different agenda of each character in the chapter.

Chapter 17

- How does Patel react to Rindi's misbehaviour?
- What are your impressions of him so far?

Chapters 18 and 19

- How would you describe Rindi and Angus' relationship?
- What are the pros and cons of this latest plan?

Chapter 20

- Why is 'Bumface' a bit of a saviour for Angus?

Chapter 21

- List all the positives that come out of the situation Angus creates in the middle of the school play.
- What is the main message Angus really wants his parents to hear?

Chapter 22

- Is it a compliment for Angus to hear his mum say he is 'the most grown-up, responsible, dependable 12 year old in Australia?' Explain your thinking.
- What is your opinion of the actions of Angus' mum and dad in this chapter?

Chapter 23

- How do you feel about 'Bumface's' actions at the end of the story? Share your ideas about what is likely to happen to Angus beyond this point.
- Why do you think Morris Gleitzman portrayed adults the way he did in this story?



Optional Extras

- If you could give Angus' parents a list of rules or guidelines about what parents in their situation are 'supposed to do', what would you write? Think of ten fundamentals – or more if you really get on a roll!
- Create your own 'Bumface' – that is, a character who has all the qualities and the lifestyle you'd love to have as a second option. This character would be who you could call upon in times of challenge and crisis – to give you advice, to take your mind off things, to remind you of the importance of being and acting your age! Consider a good name for your second self – it might be as straightforward as Angus' or more subtle!

ACTIVITIES

Author Study

Conduct an author study on Gleitzman's writing. Consider issues such as similarities and differences between his characters, settings, themes, plots, literary style, sub-texts. Can you categorise Gleitzman's work? Does this impact on his popularity as a writer? Choose another author and compare and contrast their work.

Literary Devices

One of the patterns in this book is Gleitzman's use of complications to the plot. Make a list of complications. You may like to put them into a flow-chart format, to show how they impact on the plot. Why does Gleitzman use them? (e.g. Imogen's nappy needing to be changed, p. 15; Leo getting stuck in the toilet, p. 21; play rehearsals being changed to after school, p. 43.) How would the book be different if these complications were not there?

Characterisation

- Because Angus doesn't explain himself to others they build up perceptions about what he's like (e.g. page 45 – when Angus doesn't give a truthful reason for missing play rehearsals). By writing in the third person, Gleitzman is able to give us a behind-the-scenes understanding of the characters' perceptions of each other. How does this contribute to the way we feel about the main characters (i.e. Ms Lowry, Angus's mother, Numbers One, Two, Three and Four)?
- Make a list of the names of all the characters in the novel. Which characters have their first names revealed? Which don't? Do you think this is a deliberate decision on Gleitzman's part or is it just a coincidence? What is the effect of this on the way we feel about the characters?

- Write a character reference for Angus from the point of view of one of the adult characters in the novel.
- Leo seems to be a very mature and sensitive child for his age (e.g. pp. 46, 54, 97). How realistic is this maturity and how believable is his relationship with Angus? What is the role of a character like Leo in this novel? Consider also Angus and Rindi's maturity. How does this contrast with some of the other characters?
- Which characters change throughout the book? List specific incidents which show how characters have and have not changed?
- Gleitzman seems to deliberately use a number of stereotypes in his characterisation. Why do you think he does this? What is the effect of these stereotypes on the novel's appeal?
- Make a character mobile - include specific incidents to show the true nature of the character you have chosen.
- Good writers are able to create characters that we believe in and care about. One of the ways they do this is by building characteristics that are universal to us all. What are the similarities and differences between you and Angus?
- How do these similarities and differences affect the way you relate to Angus?

Extending Readers

Bumface is a book that contains many layers. It can be read simply as a fast-paced comedy, laced with sad and confronting elements, or the reader can take up Gleitzman's challenge to read between the lines and so explore the sub-text at a deeper level. In small groups or pairs, discuss plot, sub-plots, characterisation, literary style, themes, sub-text. Use a chart, time-line or semantic web to record discussions.

- Discuss the difference between theme and sub-text. How does Gleitzman use humour to camouflage the underlying themes and sub-text of the novel?
- Are there any specific messages Gleitzman is conveying through the underlying themes and sub-text of the book? Do you think that has been a deliberate decision on Gleitzman's part, or can readers and critics see things in a book that the author may not have realised were there?
- How do you think Gleitzman feels about Angus? Do all authors give away their feelings about their characters? Do authors try to manipulate their readers, or do they just present a story and let the reader make up his or her own mind?



Role-play a discussion between Gleitzman and an interviewer about this topic.

- Create a concept map or semantic web linking the following words - responsibility, perceptions, power, maturity, misunderstanding, irony, contrast, humour (refer directly to elements such as the plot, characters and themes). Stage a debate concerning the issue of arranged marriages vs. love matches.
- Imagine you have been asked to film *Bumface*. Who would you cast in the main roles? Why? Consider issues such as: what characteristics you would want the actors to draw out for each character; setting; costume design.
- A member of your school community has demanded that the book *Bumface* be taken off the shelves of the school library. A public meeting has been called and you have been chosen to give your views about the use of this book. What would you say?



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Bumface	Morris Gleitzman	9780140387971	3-6	\$16.99		
Doubting Thomas	Morris Gleitzman	9780143302612	3-6	\$16.95		
Extra Time	Morris Gleitzman	9780143307754	3-6	\$16.99		
Grace	Morris Gleitzman	9780143302612	3-6	\$19.95		
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