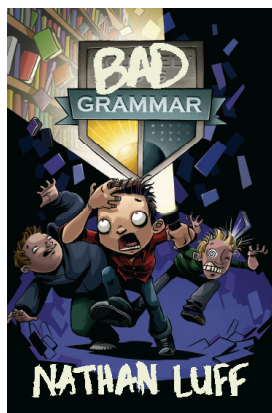


Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Bad Grammar

Author: Nathan Luff
Illustrator: Donovan Bixley
ISBN: 9781921977671
ARRP: \$16.95
NZRRP: \$18.99
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Bourkely Boys Bad Grammar. The prestigious reform school for gentlemen, bullies and warriors.

Marcus Grady is a warrior. He knows how to slay a dragon and rescue a pretty princess from imminent danger. He's an expert and could in fact write a warrior's guide, but that's only in computer games.

In real life, Marcus is an average 11 year old who just wants to be left alone. But an accident in the library one day sparks the attention of the librarian. And this nosy teacher's suggestion that Marcus be sent to a school for young boys in the middle of the nowhere is just the solution his parents have been searching for to fix his antisocial ways.

When Marcus arrives at Bourkely Boys Grammar he soon realises it's called "Bad" Grammar by the students for a reason. Why do the powerful prefects seem to be controlling everything? And who is the scary Principal Dempster with his albino dingo? There's no way that Marcus is going to stay in this place, but escape may be harder than slaying a dragon.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Nathan Luff grew up on a farm near Yass in rural New South Wales. He is one of five boys and his first novel, Chicken Stu (Scholastic, 2010), was inspired by some of the antics they got up to as kids. Nathan has studied playwriting and screenwriting at university and was nominated for an AWGIE award in 2007 for the play "Smashed". The things Nathan enjoys most in this world (in order) are: stories, music, whales and sherbet lollipops. The things he enjoys least in this world (in order) are: quicksand, snakes, sunburn and golf. Nathan's sport of choice is origami. Bad Grammar is his first title with Walker Books.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Primary years 4-6
- Ages 9+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Novel
- Fantasy genre

Themes/Ideas:

- Friendship
- Humour
- Adventure
- Mystery

National Curriculum Focus:*

English content descriptions include:

| Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ACELA1490 | ACELA1502 | ACELA1518 |
| ACELA1492 | ACELA1504 | ACELA1616 |
| ACELA1498 | ACELT1608 | ACELA1618 |
| ACELT1602 | ACELT1609 | ACELT1709 |
| ACELT1603 | ACELT1795 | ACELT1816 |
| ACELT1605 | ACELT1610 | ACELT1710 |
| ACELT1606 | ACELT1612 | ACELT1801 |
| ACELT1607 | ACELT1798 | ACELT1714 |
| ACELY1690 | ACELY1796 | ACELY1717 |

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.

Nathan Luff on writing *Bad Grammar*

The initial idea of *Bad Grammar* I used to plan out a television series with the title 'Back of Bourkely'. After working on it for a while I decided it would work better as a novel and started condensing 13 episodes of story down to one central story – I had to cut lots of characters and crazy situations that I might use in future books.

I have spent a bit of time in Broken Hill and the surrounding remote countryside and this became the inspiration for the setting. I never attended a boarding school myself – the idea both excited and terrified me. Bourkely Boys Grammar is a combination of all the things that terrified me about boarding schools!

There are many real incidents that inspired parts of the story – I had a best friend who left the country when we were in year 2 leaving me completely friendless. A couple of boys adopted me, I think because someone told them to. Also, I did have a pet rock that I lost when I was a teenager and I still miss it! Also, the Sabre-toothed Nun is a real ghost (if you believe in ghosts) who haunts my high school hall. There have been reports about her for many decades.

The ending of the story changed many times. At one point Principal Dempster was Deirdre. In another ridiculous ending, the boys staged Principal Dempster cutting off Fred's finger. I find endings very hard to write.

None of the characters are based on me, but they all have elements of my personality – if you combined the quirks of Marcus, Fred and Trent you'd probably get someone like me. Fred is my favourite character because I think he is hilarious – I sometimes have to remind myself that I write all his lines. That means I'm hilarious!!!



Discussion Questions and Activities

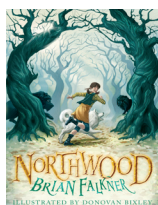
- Before reading *Bad Grammar*, view the cover and title and identify the following:
 - » The title of the book
 - » The author
 - » The illustrator
 - » The publisher
 - » The blurb
- Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end?
- After reading, examine the structure and features of the book. Identify the following:
 - » Chapter headings
 - » Title page
 - » Dedication
 - » Page numbers
 - » Paragraphs
 - » Illustrations
 - » Quotation marks
- What are the themes in *Bad Grammar*? Write a statement of belief for each theme, then assess how *Bad Grammar*'s treatment of these themes makes you feel.
- Keep a "Vocab Journal" while reading the novel. Make a note of any words you come across that you don't know and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word/phrase.
- What is the literary device used in the title where the same words can have two meanings? Why would the author use this device? Can you think of any other books or movie titles that use this device?
- What kind of text is *Bad Grammar* (i.e. narrative, procedural, persuasion, information). What features of the text make this apparent?
- Why are the chapters labeled "Level" instead of "Chapter"? What is the purpose of the Warrior's Guide sections?
- Do the rules presented in the "Warrior's Guide" apply in real life? Identify parts of the book where the rules do apply and where they don't.
- Write a warrior's guide to some other everyday activities, such as:
A Warrior's Guide to:
 - » Doing homework
 - » Getting a seat on the bus
 - » Staying up past bedtime
 - » Getting to choose what's on TV
- Write a character report for Marcus, Fred, Trent and Scarface. Include a description of their appearance (or draw a picture), personality and character development throughout the novel. Pick out one pivotal scene from the book for each character and explain how the author makes the reader care about this character.
- Is Marcus a reliable narrator? Does he always tell the truth? The start of Level 2 is a good example – could Marcus be the leader of a group if he wanted? Or level 6 where Marcus says he never gets scared yet he is shaking. How do Marcus's actions reveal something different to what he is saying?
- There are several characters with secrets in *Bad Grammar*. Why do Fred, Principal Dempster and the Librarian keep their secrets? When is it ok to keep secrets?
- Compare the language used in the beginning of Level 1 (set in the video game world) to the language used in the real world. How does this change the way you read the story? What affect does this have on the tone of the story?
- Marcus spends almost all of his free time playing video games, rather than any other social activities. What are the dangers of playing video games too much? What are some strategies you could employ to ensure time spent playing video games is in moderation with other activities such as school work, physical activities, reading etc?
- How can the reader tell when a character is speaking? How can the reader tell which character is speaking when there is a lengthy conversation between two or more characters? Look at the beginning of Level 16 (page 89 and 90) as an example.
- Have you read any stories with a similar setting or plot? Compare the two texts and list how the authors have handled the same subjects in different ways.
- How is Bourkely Boys Grammar similar or different to your school? Do you think Bourkely Boys Grammar is a realistic portrayal of a school in the real world? Why do you think the author would set the story in an unrealistic setting?
- Write a short story imagining that it was your first day at Bourkely Boys (or Girls) Grammar. Why were you sent there? How would you react to the school and students? Who would you make friends with?
- Write a book report on *Bad Grammar* stating what you liked/disliked about the book, who you think would

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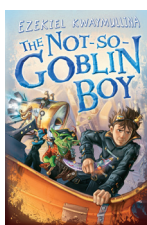
enjoy the book and mention any books that it is similar to. Use some quotes from the book to illustrate your statements. Create a class blog or Wiki to post your reviews and share them with other students. You can use this blog to post book reviews of any other book you read as a class or on your own. You can use Blogspot (<http://www.blogger.com>) or Wordpress (<http://wordpress.com/>) to create your class blog. Walker Books loves reading book reviews, send your class book reviews to educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au.

- Choose a key point in the book and rewrite it from another character's perspective. For example, Level 15 and 16 from the Librarian's perspective or Level 19 from Fred's perspective. What might the other character be thinking? How are they feeling? What is motivating their actions?
- "Bullying" is a prominent theme in this book. What does it mean to be a bully?
- What are your school's rules about bullying? Can you think of any ways to improve these rules?
- Have a class discussion on bullying, including these questions:
 - » Can someone be a bully without meaning to be?
 - » What is the difference between bullying and just fooling around?
 - » What would you do if you saw someone else being bullied?
 - » What would you do if you were being bullied?
 - » What are some possible reasons a person might be a bully?
- Class Debate: Consider the proposition "Marcus is a bad friend to Fred and Trent". Ask students to form three groups based on their agreement or disagreement with the statement.
 - » Group 1: Agree 100% with the statement
 - » Group 2: Neutral/undecided
 - » Group 3: Disagree 100% with the statement
 Students can take turns arguing their position on the statement using evidence from the book. Students are allowed to change groups during the debate if they find an argument persuasive.
- Class Activity – Mrs Blakely Guessing Game. Students take turns drawing Mrs Blakely in different outfits on the whiteboard and the class has to guess what subject Mrs Blakely is teaching that day. Some ideas to get started are:
 - » Ancient Egypt
 - » Reptiles
 - » Olympic Games
 - » Shakespeare
 - » Picasso
 - » Rainforests
 - » Cricket
 - » The First Fleet
 - » ...let your imagination run wild!

Other great junior fiction titles from Walker Books



Northwood
Author: Brian Falkner
Illustrator: Donovan Bixley
9781921529801
AU\$19.95/NZ\$22.99
Teachers' notes available



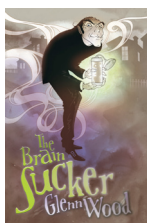
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