



Ages 9–12 • 978-1-62779-939-3 • eBook 978-1-62779-940-9

ABOUT THE BOOK

Waddle Jr. High has become a dystopian outpost with divided cliques—Sox, Jocks, Goths, Loners, Freaks, Pens, Staffers, and yes, Geeks. Society may be in danger, but middle school must go on. Enter geeky Tip and all his friends: easy-to-blush Owen; coding master Xennitopher; and brilliant, dependable Mindy, who’ve all had enough of being bullied and decide to take a stand. Together, they form a secret vigilante group: the League of Average and Mediocre Entities, better known as LAME. With everything that’s going on in the world, their school could use a few heroes. And what if those heroes were geeked-out superheroes? Get ready. Better yet, get LAME!

This irrepressible spoof series is full of the same clever humor and hilarious cartoon illustrations as the *Creature from My Closet* series.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Obert Skye is the author and illustrator of the bestselling *Creature from My Closet* series, including *Wonkenstein*, *Potterwookiee*, *Pinocula*, *Kaffish*, *The Lord of the Hat*, and *Batneezer*. He is also the author of the *Witherwood Reform School* series and the bestselling children’s fantasy adventure series *Leven Thumps and Pillage*. He lives with his family in Arizona.

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for grades K–12. To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for your classrooms and students, you are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to your classes’ needs. You know your students best!

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Cliques in Our World—Pre-reading Activity #1

Prepare a few props before the lesson begins. These props will be a visual representation of classic cliques found in the school environment. Items can include, but are not limited to, a football, pom-poms, glasses with tape on the frame, a skateboard, and a paintbrush. Before explaining the synopsis of *Geeked Out*, present the items and have students Think-Pair-Share what their significance may be. Have volunteers share what their predictions are for the meaning of the props and for the plot of the book.

Discuss with students the meaning of the term clique. Define clique as a “small group of people, with shared interests or other features in common, who spend time together and do not readily allow others to join them” (source: <https://en.oxford-dictionaries.com/definition/us/clique>). Explore whether the word clique has negative or positive connotations and why. Read aloud the eight different cliques found at Waddle Jr. High and have students Think-Pair-Share what each clique’s characteristic would be based on its name.

For older grades, students can view the first three minutes of a video about social groups by using the website address below. This video defines social groups, explores how group dynamics impact individuals, and notes how large groups act:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFZ5Dbj8DA>

Prepare to shift the conversation to relate to the students. Have students discuss if they have been exposed to cliques and if they know of any in their lives, such as at school. Cliques can contribute positive and negative attributes to a school community. Allow students to discuss whether they feel cliques can be positive or negative to an individual and to the overall school culture, and then brainstorm some of these pros and cons together as a whole class.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Author’s Purpose—Pre-reading Activity #2

Gather your spears, textbooks, and selfie sticks! In Obert Skye’s postapocalyptic world, modern-day technology related to social media is portrayed in a negative light. Only the antagonists use social media as weapons. Hashtags, selfie sticks, and emojis are examples of weapons that are portrayed throughout the story. Open the activity by discussing what students believe the author’s intention is in using social media in this way to advance the story.

- Inform students that each group will be given a different form of social media to discuss (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) and that they will work together to identify pros and cons of their social media platform.
- Organize students into small groups.
- Distribute quick descriptions of each social media platform to ensure that all students understand the app designer’s original purpose and methods for using the app.
- On poster board paper, groups record the positive and negative effects of the particular app on both individuals and society. Each group shares its findings and thoughts on the app’s impact on the community. Encourage discussion and debate!

Questions for further discussion:

- How do we as readers know how an author feels about a certain subject—in this case, social media? As students read, encourage them to identify examples from Skye’s writing that reveal his attitude toward social media.
- Do you think the creators of each of the social media apps intended them to be used the way they are? Explain.
- Do you agree with the age restrictions/recommendations for social media apps? Why or why not? If you had children, at what age would you allow them to use specific social media apps? Explain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the main characters at Otto Waddle Jr. High. What are their roles at school and what do they add to the overall community? Cite the evidence in the text that illustrates this information.
2. What about postapocalyptic Piggsburg puzzles you? How would you survive in this difficult setting?
3. In chapter 5, it's noted that Xen designed "a simple but elegant" logo for the AV Club. How would you interpret Xen's thinking regarding this logo? Do you understand it? Why or why not? If you could redesign his logo, what logo would you create and why?
4. The citizens of Piggsburg wear unusual items and accessories to keep them safe from the dangers of their world. If you lived in Piggsburg, what kind of accessories would you utilize to stay safe? List different accessories and how they would be of use to you.
5. Chapter 6 ends with a cliff-hanger. Why do you believe Skye decided to end the chapter with a cliff-hanger? How does this affect us, the readers?
6. The AV Club's biggest problem in chapter 6 is the unfortunate pressure to hit the grease-filled piñata. How would you feel if you were in their situation? In your opinion, would there be any way to get out of this situation? Why or why not?
7. In chapter 10, superpowers are revealed. How does the writer create suspense and conflict in this chapter through Xen's character?
8. Select your favorite superpower shown in the book. Why is that superpower your favorite? Cite your evidence to support your reasoning.
9. In chapter 12, Darth Susan directs the Geeks to fail the test. She says that in return, the Geeks will no longer be bullied by anyone. Do you think this deal is fair? Why or why not? Have you ever been pressured to do something you felt was wrong? Describe how you or someone you know might feel in a situation when asked to do something you/they don't believe in.
10. Marsha, one of the antagonists, has unique characteristics. Debate whether or not you think she is a leader. Compare and contrast her characteristics with those of a leader of your choosing in world history or in current events. How are their qualities similar and different? If you were a character in this book, would you proudly follow Marsha or would you rather stand against her? Why?
11. In chapter 16, every member of LAME contributes to Marsha's and the Fanatics' defeat. How did each character assist in defeating Marsha and the Fanatics? How might the book be different if only one of the characters defeated them?
12. After seeing LAME fight the Fanatics, Nerf becomes interested in joining the superhero group, but he's turned away for the time being. If you were in LAME, would you consider allowing Nerf to join the team? Why or why not? If yes, what could he add to the group?
13. At the end of the book, Nerf and Mud seem to be back to their old ways of playing tricks on other cliques at school. With LAME on duty, do you believe the school will be a safer place? Why or why not?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.



POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Clique Maps—Post-reading Activity #1

To be lame, or not to be lame?! Now that students have completed *Geeked Out*, they should have an even deeper knowledge of cliques found in schools than they did before. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will create a student-clique tree map that shows characteristics of cliques described throughout the book. Encourage students to be creative in their representations (i.e., Geeks' physical descriptions, personality traits, ways of conversing with others, goals, important quotes). At the top of the tree map, have students write Otto Waddle Jr. High Cliques. From there, students will list the different cliques present in the story. Students can note important information and characteristics under each clique's heading on the map.

Helpful link to support map creation: <https://thinkingmaps.weebly.com/types-of-maps.html>

Following the creation of the tree maps, have students compare and contrast character traits of the different cliques. As a challenge, allow students to discuss the following questions:

- How does each clique from the book add to the overall community and culture of the school?
- How do the cliques that are represented in *Geeked Out* compare to the cliques found in your own school? Are they similar or different? Do they add and/or take away from the overall community and culture of the school? Use examples to defend your answers.
- Did any cliques change over the course of the story? If so, what kinds of events caused this clique to experience changes in its characteristics?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Natural Phenomena—Post-reading Activity #2

Sweet pumpkin Wookiee! In *Geeked Out*, the AV Club members are bitten by mysterious spiders that give them superpowers. Have students research examples of natural phenomena that may or may not have given people "superpowers" in real life.

After students have completed their exploration, have them discuss their findings and what they feel is interesting (or strange) about the natural-phenomena stories. How do these occurrences relate to those read about in *Geeked Out*? How have the real-life individuals used their "supernatural power" in their lives? Then have students complete a quick write considering the following:

- Choose a superpower from the video or article. How would your life change if you possessed this superpower?
- Brainstorm a superpower that would benefit your school community. What kinds of problems could this superpower solve at school?
- How would you be able to change the world with this power?
- Would this power impact others around you, positively and/or negatively? Explain.
- As a bonus activity, offer students the opportunity to be creative by visually designing themselves as a superhero. Students may create this artwork by drawing, painting, creating a comic strip, making digital art, etc.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Overcoming Drama—Post-reading Activity #3

Calling all actors! This story depicts children who work together and overcome obstacles with the help of collaboration and superpowers. In general, your students will need to collaborate to overcome obstacles in their own lives—so let's give them an opportunity to practice!

1. Have students imagine they live in the world of Piggsburg and are students at Otto Waddle Jr. High.
2. Organize students into small groups where they will write a creative skit in which they overcome obstacles by collaborating and using their own unique superpower.
3. Create a theater experience by allowing students to present their short skits to the class.
4. Have students discuss and write reflections about the process of collaborating to create the skit. Was the process easy, stressful, complicated, etc.? Was there an initial leader who took control? How did your group pull together and overcome stressful moments? How were everyone's opinions and ideas addressed? Do you think it's more effective to explore conflict visually and auditorily through a skit or by reading about conflict in written form like a chapter book or novel? Explain. Compare and contrast your group's collaborative experience with an example from *Geeked Out* when the Geeks were faced with an obstacle.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Recycle, Reuse, and Reinvent—Post-reading Activity #4

Fire the burrito launcher! In Piggsburg, citizens reuse or “upcycle” various household items to create new and exciting items. For example, cookie sheets are used as vests and tablets are used for self-defense. Inform students that their task is to bring a household item to class that they believe can be reused in Piggsburg. Students will present their item to the class and try to persuade their classmates that the item could be functional and have a significant purpose. Hold an anonymous vote for the most useful item! After students share their creations, they break into small groups and brainstorm how they could combine items to reinvent another item! Finally, discuss the following:

Was the process of finding an item to repurpose easy or difficult? Why or why not?

Have you ever reused an item at home for a different purpose? Explain.

Do you believe any of your group's new items could be beneficial in Piggsburg? Give specific reasons by citing information from the book to defend your answer.

As a bonus activity, find an example in real life where an object has been repurposed. What was its original purpose? How has it been altered and why?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Comic Strip Creation—Post-reading Activity #5

#Fanatic4Life! Throughout *Geeked Out*, readers were exposed to the wacky language of Marsha and the Fanatics. Obert Skye developed Marsha as a character that speaks using only emojis. Begin the activity by asking students what some of their favorite emojis are and which ones they use frequently. Show the examples that Skye illustrates in the story of Marsha communicating via emojis.

Have students Think-Pair-Share what she is saying by translating the emojis. Divide students into pairs and distribute note cards that list an important scene from the book. Explain to students that they are to create a comic strip from the short excerpt. Students can either handwrite their comic strip or use an appropriate application on the computer and/or iPad to create their

comic strip. Tell them these two rules: they can only use emojis for dialogue and they can't show the other groups what they're working on! During the activity, have a quick discussion with the students about why they believe Obert Skye created this characteristic for Marsha: Why did Obert Skye have Marsha speak only through emojis? How does this enhance her character in the odd world of Piggsburg? How challenging or easy is it for you to create dialogue using only emojis?

After students create their comics, have each group presents its piece. Challenge the remainder of the groups to guess which scene is being portrayed through the emojis!

Online resources for comic strip creation:

<https://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>

<https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboard-creator>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/games-tools/comic-creator-a-30237.html>

Helpful link to support the meaning of emojis:

<https://emojipedia.org>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

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