

# THE LOSER CLUB

The beloved *New York Times* bestselling author of the modern classic *Frindle* celebrates books and the joy of reading with a new school story you'll love!

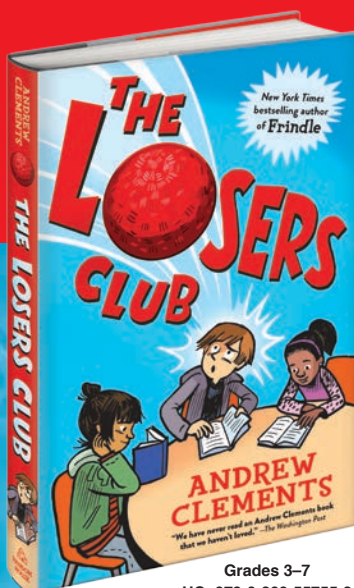
BY ANDREW  
CLEMENTS

"I think this is going to be one that my fifth graders are going to love."

—Colby Sharp, fifth-grade teacher in Michigan and cofounder of the Nerdy Book Club



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY GUIDE



Grades 3-7  
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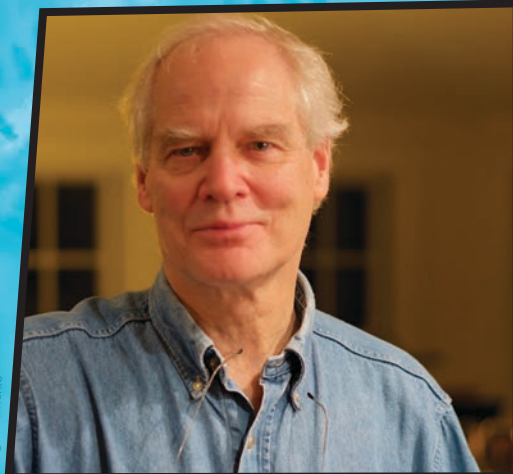
# About the Book

## Sixth grader Alec can't put a good book down.

So when Principal Vance lays down the law—pay attention in class, or *else*—Alec takes action. He can't lose all his reading time, so he starts a club. A club he *intends* to be the only member of. After all, reading isn't a team sport, and no one would want to join something called the Losers Club, right? But as more and more kids find their way to Alec's club—including his ex-friend turned bully *and* the girl Alec is maybe starting to like—Alec notices something. Real life might be messier than his favorite books, but it's *just* as interesting.

With *The Losers Club*, Andrew Clements brings us a new school story that's a love letter to books and to reading and reminds us that sometimes the best stories are the ones that happen off the page—our own!

★ “Clements’s latest is engaging and funny. Book lovers and reluctant readers alike will enjoy the relatable characters, realistic dialogue, and humorous scenes.” *—School Library Journal, Starred*



**ANDREW CLEMENTS** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the beloved modern classic *Frindle*, which has sold over six million copies, won nineteen state awards (and was nominated for thirty-eight!), and been translated into more than a dozen languages. Called the “master of school stories” by *Kirkus Reviews*, Andrew is now the author of over eighty acclaimed books for kids. He lives in Maine with his wife, Becky. They have four grown sons and two rascally cats. Visit Andrew online at [andrewclements.com](http://andrewclements.com).

# Pre-Reading Activities

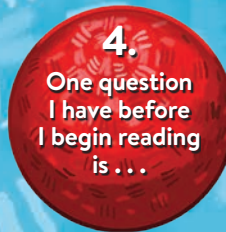
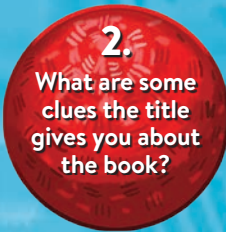
## Character Trait Quick Write

The main character, Alec, has a strong desire to always act honorably. Even when he is given an opportunity to speak poorly about someone who has mistreated him, Alec chooses to be kind. This isn't always an easy choice to make. Encourage students to do a quick write about a time they witnessed someone act with integrity. Share these quick writes as well as students' thoughts and ideas on how to reflect this important character trait. Tell students to be on the lookout for situations in the story that exemplify Alec's honorable choices or behavior.

## Roll-a-Question

Share the questions and prompts below, and divide the class into pairs to start the conversations.

**Roll the die to find out which question or prompt you will respond to. Once you have given your response, see what your partner thinks. Discuss why your answers are different or the same.**



# During-Reading Activities

## Build a Bookordion

"The Losers Club is actually a pretty good name. . . . We lose ourselves in books for hours and hours—books about all kinds of people and tons of different places. Then we come back, and we bring things with us." (p. 224)

In *The Losers Club*, Alec and the club members make an accordion of every book they've ever read. Have students build their own bookordion of books that they love, books that taught them an important lesson, or books they want to read. (You might put your own on your door to introduce your reading-self to kids. You could also encourage your class to make a bookordion of all the books they read over the course of a semester or school year. Get other classrooms involved, and see which classroom has the longest bookordion!) They can draw or print out pictures of their book covers, and then tape them together to give inspiration to their classmates. See Andrew Clements's very own bookordion below!



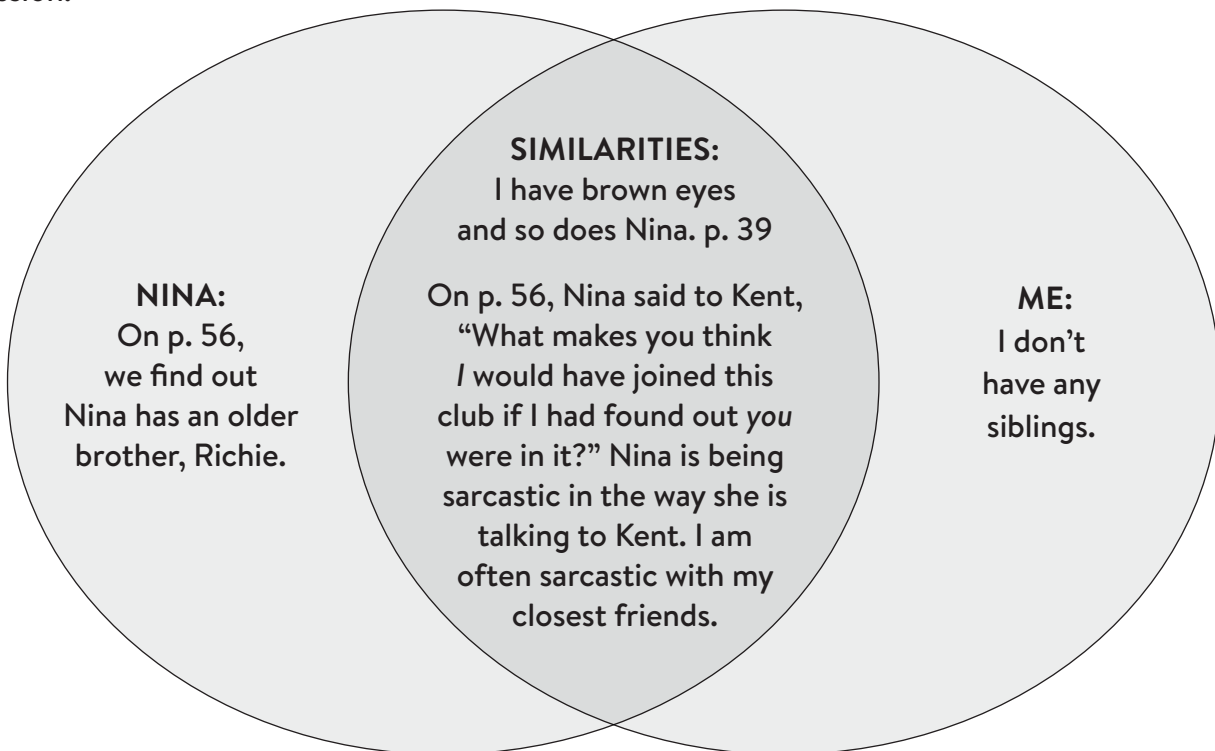
# During-Reading Activities

## Compare and Contrast

Make a class set of copies of a Venn diagram. Students will work to compare themselves to one of the main characters. Here are some questions to help jumpstart their thinking:

- How are you and this character the same?
- Can you find physical descriptions of this character in the text? Do you look alike?
- What are this character's hobbies? Which after-school club do they belong to? Do you have similar interests?
- What are some personality traits that you would associate with this character? Are they brave? Kind? Outgoing? Shy? Boastful? Do any of these traits describe you?

Be sure to use specific examples from the story for each notation that you make on the Venn diagram. See below for examples that could be added to the diagram and later used in a class discussion.



## Dear Diary . . .

The characters in this story experience a lot of ups and downs. Alec struggles with being teased by Kent and with the challenges of starting a new after-school club. Alec also realizes he may like Nina—as a *girl*. This causes all sorts of confusion for him. The reader also sees Nina and Kent go through their own ups and downs throughout the story.

Ask students to choose one character, and reflect on the events that had the greatest impact on that character during *The Losers Club*. Students will then be asked to write three diary entries from the perspective of that character. Remind students that a diary should include thoughts, feelings, and specific events from the story.

## Losers Club Comic Strip

Identifying themes in a story is a higher-order skill that involves inferring and critical thinking. Here are a few steps toward this goal:

- 1) *Properly Define Theme* because it can sometimes be difficult to think beyond the elements and events of a story.
- 2) *Prepare Students to Infer* because the author will not tell readers what the theme is.
- 3) *Give Students Practice Identifying Themes* from a variety of different texts, including *The Losers Club*.

To prepare for the comic strip activity, divide the class into groups. Identify several possible themes of *The Losers Club* (friendship, courage, perseverance). Groups pick a theme and work together to create an eight-section comic strip with captions. The comic strip should depict a part of the story that they feel exemplifies their theme. Give students the opportunity to share their work upon completion. You could even make a class comic book!

## My Character's Playlist

Assign student teams one character and give them time to reflect on that character's storyline, considering all their ups and downs throughout *The Losers Club*. Groups are to think about the character's personality, motivations, hopes, and actions. Then use that information to help choose a minimum of three songs that they think this character would have in their personal playlist. Groups will select songs that align with their character's traits as well as the situations they go through in the story. Songs should reflect any changes that may occur for the character, as well as important events and how their character responds to them. Use the below example of Brian (from *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen) as a model for citing evidence from both the song and the text to explain your playlist selections.

Remind students to be sure to read the lyrics of each of their song selections to get a complete understanding of the song and its meaning.

**CHARACTER'S NAME AND BOOK:** *Brian from HATCHET by Gary Paulsen*

**SONG:** *"Fight Song" by Rachel Platten*

**EXPLANATION WITH EVIDENCE:** *After many trials, Brian finds a new strength and realizes he must conquer his fears if he is going to survive.*

*"Not hope that he would be rescued—that was gone. But hope in his knowledge. Hope in the fact that he could learn and survive and take care of himself. Tough hope, he thought that night. I am full of tough hope." (p. 120)*

*This makes me think that Rachel Platten's "Fight Song" would be on Brian's playlist.*

*"This is my fight song. Take back my life song.*

*Prove I'm alright song. My power's turned on.*

*Starting right now I'll be strong."*

# Post-Reading Activities

## Start Your Own Losers Club!

Alec was surprised to find out how many other kids loved reading and wanted to join his club. With a few simple steps, you can start a Losers Club for your own class or as an after-school activity!

- Depending on your daily schedule, you can hold your Losers Club meetings after school or use the idea to facilitate literature circles in your classroom during reading time.
- Since we know there is a direct correlation between choice and intrinsic motivation, it is important to let students select their own book-club books, just like in *The Losers Club*. Students can meet in a common area such as the classroom or school library and enjoy the time to read silently with other bookworms.
- A key to Alec's success was his vast knowledge of books. With this, he was able to recommend specific titles to friends like Kent and witness a peer falling in love with a book that they might not have otherwise chosen. To bring this special component into your book club, you can set aside time at the end of each meeting for students to talk about what they like or don't like about the book. They can also recommend specific books for different friends as Alec does in the book. This will foster conversation about different titles, genres, and authors among peers. It might also be helpful to have a librarian come in once a month to aid in the discussion.

## Personal Connection

Ask students: Is there something in this story that has happened to you or someone you know? Using as many details as possible, students tell how their experience is the same as the character's experience in the story. They should describe what they learned and what the character learned from this experience.

## A Hero's Journey

The Hero's Journey is a cycle first explained in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell in 1949. Watch the following TED Talk for more information about this ancient formula.

[youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA)

In *The Losers Club*, Alec is the story's hero. Discuss the TED Talk about a hero's journey, and see if students can identify the different events on Alec's path to becoming a hero.

The narrator in the video uses a clock to help organize the hero's cycle. The chart on the following page will allow students to do the same. Students write examples from *The Losers Club* that meet the criteria for each hour or stage in the hero's cycle. Remind students to include the page numbers where the evidence can be found.

Students can also use this chart to follow a hero's journey in another favorite story, such as *Hatchet*, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, or *Number the Stars*. Compare that hero's journey to Alec's journey. Alternatively, they can think of a time in their life when they had to act heroically, and use this chart to chronicle their personal journey.

# A Hero's Journey

Book Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hero's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Stages of a Hero's Journey

## Evidence and Page Number

### Status Quo

What is life like for this character at the beginning of their story? Are they happy? Are they wishing for a change of some kind?

12:00

The story opens with Alec sitting in the Hot Seat in Mrs. Vance's office. He was in trouble, once again, for reading during class and not paying attention. If Alec doesn't change his habits, he is going to be sent to summer school. (p. 7)

### Call to Adventure

Something happens here that calls the character to a task. Is it an invitation? A challenge? A message?

1:00

### Assistance

The character can't do it alone. Who will help them?

2:00

### Departure

Our character leaves their ordinary life or situation (literally or figuratively) for a new life or adventure.

3:00

### Trials

What are some of the obstacles this character encounters?

4:00

### Approach

This is when the character has to face their biggest fear. What is it?

5:00

### Crisis

This is typically a major problem—the most difficult so far—for our character and hero.

6:00

### Treasure

Does the character gain something?

7:00

### Result

What happened as a result of the Approach and Crisis? Did the character prevail?

8:00

### Return

The character departs the situation or new world and returns to their old world.

9:00

### New Life

Back home, the character has a different perspective on things and has changed because of this journey.

10:00

### Resolution

All of the details become clear now, even for minor characters in the story.

11:00

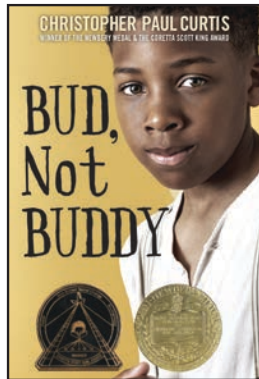
### New Status Quo

The character's life has changed forever.

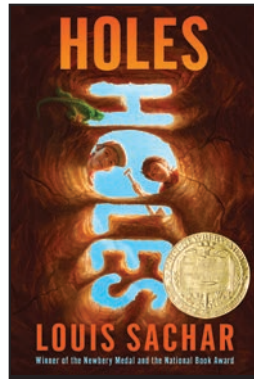
12:00

# Share These Gems from *The Losers Club* Book List

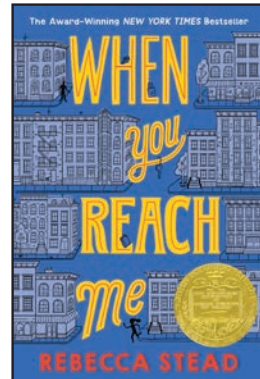
## Middle Grade



***Bud, Not Buddy***  
Christopher Paul  
Curtis  
978-0-440-41328-8



***Holes***  
Louis Sachar  
978-0-440-41480-3

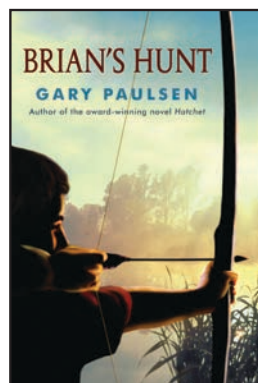


***When You Reach Me***  
Rebecca Stead  
978-0-375-85086-8

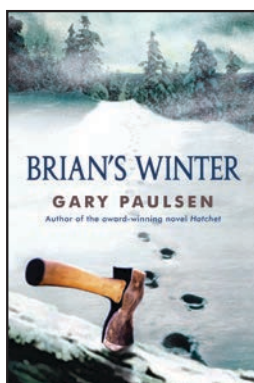
## Young Adult



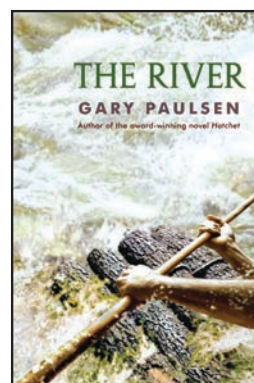
***The Book Thief***  
Markus Zusak  
978-0-375-842207



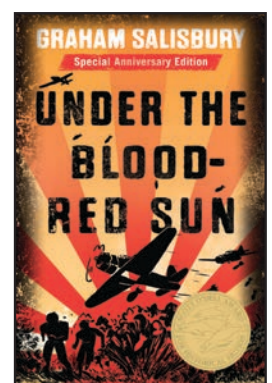
***Brian's Hunt***  
Gary Paulsen  
978-0-307-92959-4



***Brian's Winter***  
Gary Paulsen  
978-0-307-92958-7



***The River***  
Gary Paulsen  
978-0-307-92961-7



***Under the Blood-Red Sun***  
Graham Salisbury  
978-0-385-38655-5



Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed in This Educators' Guide

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.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.