

## Story Study Facilitator Resource Pack: Grr

**Teachers Guide:** Read the following paragraphs yourself prior to facilitating the discussion questions with children. This will enable you to ask the questions confidently and use them as tools to help children figure out what is going on in the story as well as what lessons can be learnt from it. By asking questions and having children come up with answers, their learning experience will be more fun and more effective than if you were to simply give them all of the answers. If they are struggling to find strong answers, use the following paragraphs to help steer children in a more focused direction.

### Story Summary

GRRRRR by Rob Biddulph is the story of two bears named Fred and Boris. Fred's GRRRRR sound is the loudest of any bear around and he has lots of trophies to prove it. But this year, a new bear named Boris arrives in town. Just before the competition to see who has the loudest GRRRRR, Fred wakes up to find his GRRRRR is missing! Lucky for him, he finds friends who are willing to help him find it. In the end, Boris is caught as the GRRRRR thief, but Fred and his friends learn that Boris isn't such a bad guy after all—he is just lonely – and Fred realizes that Boris isn't that different from him. They all see that no number of trophies or medals can give you the same feeling as being surrounded by friends who are willing to help you. The story of GRRRRR explores the **power of friendship**, ways we **cover up our feelings**, **winning** and **losing**, and using **empathy** to see similarities instead of differences.

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### Read the Story

Before reading the book, familiarize yourself with the book by reading it all the way through once on your own time. Use this time to become familiar with the basic outline of the story.

- Read the book a second time -- this time out loud to yourself. The book has a consistent rhyme and rhythm, so practice delivering them. Practice your own loud GRRRRR – don't be shy! Find places where you may need to slow down for children to understand. Practice holding the book so your child/children can see it while you are reading.

Reading with children:

- Make sure all children are in a place where they can hear you and see the pictures clearly.
- Introduce the book -- show them the cover, read the title, and introduce the author/illustrator.
- Before opening the book, ask your child/children to repeat the title after you: GRRRRRR. Let them be loud! This will get them engaged with the book and focused on the reading.
- Begin reading the story. Remember to speak clearly and to take lots of time on each page so that children can understand what is going on, both with the words and the pictures.
- Give them enough time to state what they think and feel.



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- Read through the words while showing children what's happening on each page.
- Spend time with each page and explain what is going on.
- Ask questions about what is going on in each picture.
- Once you have finished reading, ask children what they liked about the story.
- Ask some questions from the list below (choose questions that seem relevant for your child/group of children).
- Make sure that **everybody** gets a chance to ask and answer questions. Don't let the older, more confident, and/or louder children take over everything.

### Discussion Questions and Topics

#### **Comprehension Questions to ask children – These questions are designed to see how well children understood the story:**

- Does winning all of the contests make Fred happy?
- What does Boris think will happen if he wins?
- What does Boris think it means to be a winner? Does his idea about being a winner change by the end of the story? If so, how?
- How is Fred able to win the contest without his grrrrrr?

#### **Discussion Questions to ask children – These questions are designed to help children think critically about the story and formulate their own individual ideas and opinions:**

- Quote: "Fred looks at Boris and what does he see? A bear that is not all that different than he."
  - How are Fred and Boris similar?
  - Why does seeing similarities between himself and Boris make it easier for Fred to forgive Boris?
  - Is Fred just a winner, and Boris just a loser, or is it more complicated than that? If so, how are they so similar?
  - If Fred is such a winner, why is he still so sad and lonely?
- Fred thinks to himself "Who needs Jemimas, Davids, or Sophies? My friends are my prizes, my medals, my trophies." He seems to be filling the void where friends should be with his trophies, and he spends time he could spend with friends training for the contest. Why do you think he does this?
  - Do other people you know ever try to fill holes in their life with something else? How?
- Quote: "Fred lost his Grrrrr... but discovered his friends."
  - Fred is put in a bad situation that, with the help of others, ends up causing a good outcome. Have you ever experienced anything like that?
  - Why is it important to be able to find a silver lining in a bad situation?
- Why do you think Boris steals Fred's Grrrrr? Is he just a bad bear, or is it more complicated than that?
  - Do you think Boris did it to hurt Fred, or just to help himself? Do you think Boris was more focused on how Fred would feel losing, or how Boris himself would feel after winning? Is it possible that he never even thought about how his actions would make Fred feel?
- Have you ever cheated? If so, why did you do it? How did it work out in the long run?
  - We think: People usually get away with cheating in real life for a short while (gangsters, criminals, politicians, etc.), but in the end, most end up worse for it. Can you think of any examples of that from your own life? Do you agree with us or do you think cheating is a good idea?
- What are some of the advantages of having friends? How does it make life better?

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- Have you ever done something you knew was wrong in order to make friends?
- Have you ever done bad things in front of your friends, just to look cool? What were you thinking when you did?
- What's the difference between a winner and a loser? Is there one, in the end?
- Why do we, as a society, place such a value on winning?
- Fred says to Boris that he thinks that they are "both winners". What do you think he meant by that? Fred seems to be redefining the definition of what it means to be a winner. What do you think his new definition of a winner is?

### Activity 1: Paper Strength Test

➤ **Resources:**

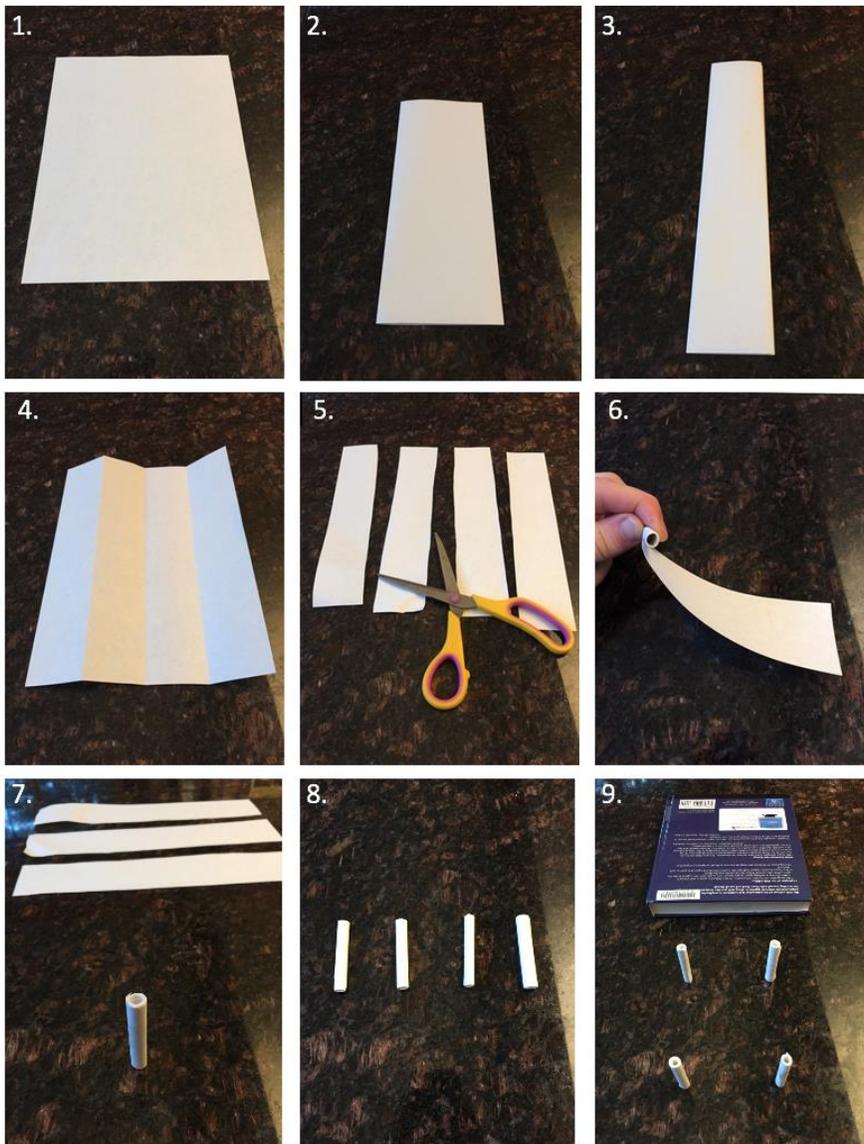
- Small pile of A4 paper (recycled)
- Several large books (hard cover)
- Tape
- Scissors (optional)

**Activity:** This activity is designed to help children understand the strength of paper, and how that strength can change when paper works together.

Hold up a piece of paper to the child/children. Ask them: **How strong is this paper?** Let them give their first reactions, either answers or laughter. Ask: **Do you think this paper is stronger than me?** After the child/children answer, rip the paper in half down the middle -- to make children laugh, pretend to struggle as you do it.

➤ **Make your tubes** (see image to the right for further guidance).

- Take **one** piece of paper and fold it in half lengthwise. Then, fold it in half again. This will create **four equal sections**.
- Unfold the piece of paper and use scissors to cut along the creases or fold the paper back and forth along each line a couple times, then tear along each crease to create **four equal strips**.



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- Then, take each strip, and roll it up into a tight **cylinder**. Use small bits of your tape to keep the rolls tight. **You should now have four tubes of the same height**. These four tubes can now be arranged to hold up your book.
- **Arrange your tubes.**
  - Now, arrange the four pillars on the table or floor so that one will stand under each corner of the book. Make sure they are able to stand up straight.
  - Then, very carefully, place the book on top of the paper tubes. **It is important to put the book onto all four tubes at once. A major component of this experiment is balance. Distribute weight equally across all four tubes, so that no one tube takes on more weight than any other.**
  - Take your hands away. The book should be resting on the paper, well off the surface. Allow your child/children to inspect the tower, and even let them place their hands under the book.
  - Explain that, when the pieces of paper work together, and when you roll them to have many layers of paper in each tube, they can hold much more than one big piece of paper.

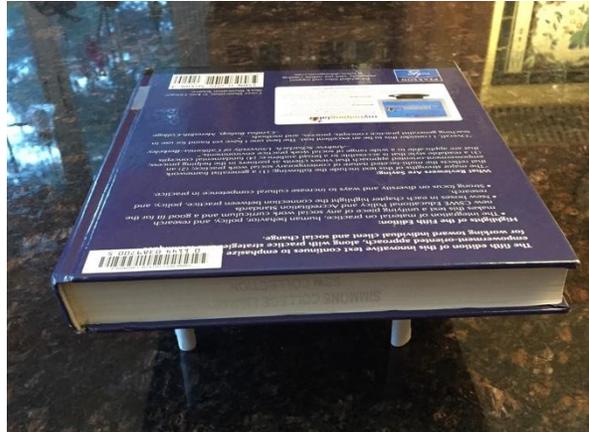


Figure 1 Short tubes are used in the image on the left whereas tall tubes are used in the image on the right.

### Activity 2: Make Your Own Masks (& Optional Drama)

- **Resources:**
  - Mask & Accessories printouts
  - Colouring materials (crayons, coloured pencils, etc.)
  - Scissors

**Activity:** This activity will help children interact with and connect with the characters in the story GRRRRR.

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- Explain to your child/children that, today, you will each be making your own mask, based on a character in the book. Distribute drawing materials, scissors, and the templates. The children will get to colour their bear like Fred, like Boris, or however they want to. There is an accessory sheet with Boris glasses & moustache, Fred's headband, and a few things bears wear in the book. They can colour these in, cut them out, and glue them onto their bears.
- Give them however much time they need to complete their masks, then help them cut them out. Once they all have masks, let them walk around, pretending to be creatures of the woods. They can talk to each other, talk about the book, give their best GRRRRRs, etc.

### **OPTIONAL DRAMA:**

- Time permitting, and if your child/children seem to be engaged with the characters, put them into small groups (1 to 5 children).
- Give each group 10-20 minutes to come up with a short play that answers one of the following questions:
  - *Have you ever done something you knew was wrong in order to make friends, like Boris did? Why did you do it? How did you feel after? How did your friends feel?*
  - *Have you ever been so focused on winning something, like Fred, that you lost track of more important things, like friends or family? What happened?*
- Have the child/children make masks to represent the characters for their play.
- When the child/children/groups of children have completed their skit, have them perform it for you, other members of the family or an audience of stuffed animals.



Figure 2 Bear mask & accessory templates attached

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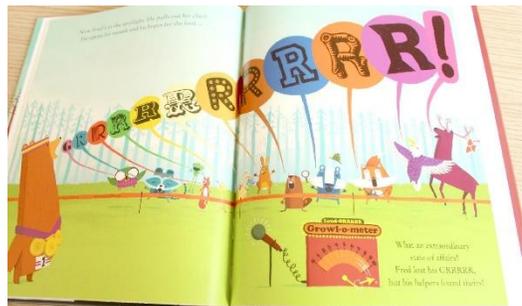
### Activity 3: Find Your Own GRRRRR

➤ **Resources:**

- Piece of paper
- Magazines
- Newspaper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons/Colouring materials

**Activity:** In this activity, children will each try to find their own GRRRRR. They will choose their own noise and use magazines and newspapers to find the letters.

- Flip to the pages in GRRRRR shown to the right. Let your child/children study the various styles of letters, and how they get bigger and bigger as it goes along.
- Start by asking your child/children the following:
- “GRRRRR is what bears say, and they all say it differently – what do YOU say? What is your own, unique GRRRRR?”
- As they think over the questions, distribute magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue, and paper.
- To start, the child/children should draw a version of themselves in the bottom left corner, right where Fred is in the book (see picture above).
- They can draw themselves however they like. Study how the letters get bigger as they get further from Fred, and make sure they leave enough space.
- Now, they will create their own version of GRRRRR, using whatever word they want. It can be “Hello,” “hahaha,” “yebo,” “molo,” or anything else (see examples below).
- To create their own word, have the child/children flip through magazines and newspapers for inspiration. One option is to look for letters that are already there (in headlines, articles, adverts, etc.), cut them out, and glue them onto their drawing as is. Another option is to find pages where they like the pattern or colour, then create their own letters just by cutting out the shape, then glue them. The last option is for children to use their colouring material to draw on their own letters. Whichever way, they will have their own unique version of a GRRRRR.
- Once complete, ask the child/children the following:
- What word did you choose? Why did you choose it? How does it represent you?



### Activity 4: People in My World

➤ **Resources:**

- Plain paper
- Colouring Materials

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**Activity:** This activity will help children consider the people in their lives who are most important to them and how valuable these people are.

- Give the child/children paper and colouring materials.
- Ask them to draw themselves in the middle of a clean sheet of paper
- Ask them to think about all the people in their lives and then draw the ones that help the child through difficult times all around them on the sheet of paper (this could be friends, family, neighbours, teachers, pets)
- Once completed, ask the child/children why they chose to surround themselves with these specific people. Ask the child how these people make them feel and why. Ask the children if they think life would be more difficult if these people were not surrounding them and how.

### Activity 5: The Best At

➤ **Resources:**

- Cardboard
- String / ribbon
- Hole punch
- Plastic lid or circle for tracing (about 7-10cm in diameter)
- Scissors
- Colouring materials

**Activity:** This activity will help boost your child's confidence.

- Ask your child/children to consider the things they love doing and the things they are good at (this might be dancing, singing, reading, languages, music, maths, etc.).
- Ask your child/children what makes them good at this specific thing?
- Have your child/children use a plastic lid or circular object to draw a circle onto a piece of cardboard and then cut it out.
- Encourage your child/children to get creative and draw on the cardboard circle an image to represent the thing that they believe they are best at.
- Once the illustration is complete, help your child/children punch a hole in the circle and thread string or ribbon through the hole knotting the end.
- Play some fitting music as you officially bestow upon your child/children their medal for being the best at the thing that they have selected.
- Ask them how it feels to be the best at this one thing. Ask them how important it is to be the best at something? Ask them if there is anything else that might be more important than being the best?

### Activity 6: Recreate a Page

➤ **Resources:**

- GRRRRR by Rob Biddulph
- Plain paper
- Magazines
- Newspaper
- Pre-researched Bear Facts
- Glue

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- Scissors
- Colouring materials

**Activity:** This activity will help children unleash their creative and interpretive side by recreating a page from the book in their own style.

- Let the child flip through GRRRRR to choose their favourite page spread. Ask them to study the page, especially the illustrations, as this is what they will be reproducing.
- Give the child/children magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue, and paper.
- Have them consider how they would have drawn or created the images for the specific page, if they were the artist for this picture book.
- Ask them to recreate the image using their own style, either by replicating the imagery with magazine pictures, colouring materials, pencils, etc. or by completely re-interpreting the page including the animals, their position on the page and whatever else they might like to add or amend on the page (using the mentioned materials).
- Once complete, ask the child/children the following:
  - *What did you choose to do? Why did you choose it? Do you think your version is better than the original? Why? What makes it better? If you could do this exercise again is there anything you might change? What would you change and Why?*

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*Thanda is a non-profit organisation based in rural Mtwalume, KwaZulu Natal South Africa. Our curriculum is made up of activities that we have developed over 12 years. The ideas and inspiration for our activities come from is a wonderful combination of educators, books, websites, YouTubers, and other places and people on the internet. We are very grateful for all of them. Where we use ideas or activities directly from a source, we always endeavour to give credit to the creator. We do not endeavour to profit from these story studies, we only wish to add value to the lives of people we may have the opportunity of crossing paths with.*

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