

# *Teacher's Pest*

## **Educators' Guide**

### **About the Book**

Don't be fooled by his friendly smile, his perfect manners, or his shiny red apple. Student council president Howard Mergler is actually a sinister bug-monster in disguise—and he's summoning swarms of roaches, wasps, fleas, and head lice into the halls of Lovecraft Middle School! Twelve-year-old Robert Arthur is the only student who can stop him—but he'll need help from his best friends: the school bully, the school ghost, and an extremely courageous two-headed rat.

This third novel in the Lovecraft Middle Scholl series begins right where *Professor Gargoyle* and *The Slither Sisters* ended—with more action, more adventure, and more outrageous monsters!

### **Genre**

Children's Horror

### **Themes**

- Supernatural/paranormal events
- Friendship
- Bullying
- Courage
- Middle school
- Arthropods/bugs

# Vocabulary

## Chapters 1–5

abdomen, welt, extraction, exasperated, sinister, nits, ascending, abducting, hazmat, concealed, enzymes, proboscis

## Chapters 6–10

ventilation, duct, monotone, silverfish, arthropod, foiling, converging, intimidated, lumbering, illuminating, chasm, void, precipice, rapped, extended

## Chapters 11–15

grave, barge, ancient, breach, leviathan, furiously, mandibles, extended, emerged, abruptly, labyrinth, descended, awe, crested, majestic, hub

## Chapters 16–20

chasm, predicament, precipice, subterranean, larvae, affixed, corroded, adjacent, burrow, tethered, acutely, intruders, metamorphosis, torrent, buoyant, vengeance

# Before Reading

- Use *Teacher's Pest* to introduce or complement a science unit on bugs/arthropods. Preteach bug-related vocabulary in the novel by dividing students into five small groups and asking each group to label diagrams of the body parts of insects, spiders, crustaceans, scorpions, or centipedes. Discuss the life cycle of various bugs. Have student sort pictures of arthropods into their classifications. (For information about bugs, including diagrams and life cycle charts, see **EnchantedLearning.com** or **SmithLifeScience.com**.)
- Help students recall and summarize important events from *Professor Gargoyle* and *The Slither Sisters*, paying special attention to the cliff-hanger at the end of *The Slither Sisters*. What do students think will happen to Robert, Glenn, and Karina in *Teacher's Pest*? What role will Howard Mergler play?
- Have students take a picture-walk through the novel and predict story events by writing a caption for each illustration in their reader's response journal.

## While Reading

- After reading each chapter that contains an illustration, ask students to check whether the caption they wrote before reading was correct. Have students revise their captions based on the events in the story.
- Help students make connections between genres and content areas by pairing this novel study with poet Paul Fleishman’s Newbery Award–winning book *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*. Students will enjoy partner-reading poems detailing the inner lives of insects from lice to fireflies.
- After reading chapters that end with a cliff-hanger (for example, Chapter 1, Chapter 8, Chapter 11, Chapter 17), discuss what might happen next. Have students support their predictions with evidence from the text. Be sure to revisit students’ predictions after reading.
- In Chapter 7, readers discover that Howard is a *shaggai*, a fictional bug. Help students use Google to research this term on the Internet (Wikipedia has some good information; Google Images are interesting as well). Then have students draw, name, and describe themselves as a bug.
- Help students become flexible users of vocabulary and increase their knowledge of the parts of speech by having them fill in the boxes on the Word Form Chart (see the sample chart for Chapters 1–5 in this educators’ guide; a blank chart for subsequent chapters is also included). Students must add suffixes to the base or root words to change the parts of speech. Use a suffix list and a dictionary as resources. Then have students write sentences using different forms of the words.

- Use *Teacher’s Pest* to teach students—especially reluctant readers—about story structure. Use graphic organizers to help students organize their ideas. Then use the activities in “After Reading,” below, to extend students’ thinking. Search for the “character map” organizer at **ReadWriteThink.org**. It helps students analyze one or more characters in the novel. To access graphic organizers to print or use with an interactive white board, search the following terms at **www.scholastic.com/teachers**:
  - **Graphic Organizer: Problem and Solution Diagram**  
Identify the main problem and solution, the main character’s goal, and important events.
  - **Graphic Organizer: Story Map**  
Determine the main and supporting characters, the setting, the most important problem, and the solution.
  - **Graphic Organizer: Plot Sheet and Conflict List**  
Analyze the plot, identify the primary conflicts, and write an opinion of the story.
  - **Graphic Organizer: Setting Comparison**

### **Determine similarities and differences between the setting of *Teacher’s Pest* and students’ own lives.** **After Reading**

- After students complete the Problem and Solutions Diagram or the Story Map organizer (see “While Reading,” above), have them write a summary of the novel for an audience that has not read the book.
- When students have completed the Plot Sheet and Conflict List graphic organizer (see “While Reading,” above), have them write a book report that summarizes the plot, provides evidence supporting one of the conflicts they identified, and/or elucidates their opinion of the novel.

- After students complete the Setting Comparison organizer (see “While Reading,” above), take a class walk around the school and the surrounding neighborhood, paying attention to unusual or unique features. As a class, write a detailed description of your school’s setting and discuss how the plot of *Teacher’s Pest* could be altered to take place in and around your school.
- After students complete and discuss the Character Map organizer (see “While Reading,” above), have them choose a chapter from *Teacher’s Pest* to rewrite from one character’s point of view (for example, rewrite Chapter 11 from Howard Mergler’s point of view, or rewrite Chapter 8 from Pip and Squeak’s point view).
- As a class, study real book reviews and discuss the genre of review writing. Have students pretend they are book critics for a magazine and write a review of *Teacher’s Pest* in which they give the book 0–5 stars and tell readers why they should (or should not) read the book. For a detailed lesson plan on review writing, see [www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/exploring-genre-review-writing](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/exploring-genre-review-writing).
- Discuss whether students think *Teacher’s Pest* would make a good film. Adapt the activities from one of the following websites to help students make movie posters as a persuasive writing activity:
  - [www.steugeneschool.org/documents/Portwood/Book%20Reports/MoviePoster.pdf](http://www.steugeneschool.org/documents/Portwood/Book%20Reports/MoviePoster.pdf)
  - [www.cwksmarts.com/admin/assets/classroom/Calabash%20Charter%20Academy/mkroll/Class%20News%20/MOVIE%20POSTER%20BOOK%20REPORT%20PROJECT%20kroll.pdf](http://www.cwksmarts.com/admin/assets/classroom/Calabash%20Charter%20Academy/mkroll/Class%20News%20/MOVIE%20POSTER%20BOOK%20REPORT%20PROJECT%20kroll.pdf)

## About the Author

Charles Gilman is the author of the Lovecraft Middle School series—and the pen name of Jason Rekulak, an editor who lives with his wife and children in Philadelphia. When he’s not dreaming up new tales of Lovecraft Middle School, he’s biking along the fetid banks of the Schuylkill River in search of two-headed rats and other horrific beasts.

## **About the Illustrator**

From an early age, Eugene Smith dreamed of drawing monsters, mayhem, and madness. Today, he is living the dream in Chicago, Illinois, where he resides with his wife, Mary, and their daughters, Audrey and Vivienne.