

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The War with Grandpa

by

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Book Information

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Book Level: 3.9
Interest Level: MG

Peter is thrilled to hear that Grandpa is coming to live with him, until he finds out that he will have to give up his room. Peter decides that it will take a war to regain his room, but Grandpa has ideas of his own for retaining the room.

Award: State Award; Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

Topics: Family Life, Grandparents; Humor/Funny, Funny; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 1-3; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8

Main Characters

Grandpa Mrs. Stokes's father, who has moved from Florida and takes over Peter's bedroom

Jennifer Peter's sister, who really likes to know secrets

Mr. & Mrs. Stokes Peter's parents, who encourage him to be "grown-up" about Grandpa's move

Peter Stokes the principal character in the story; a fifth-grade boy "declaring war" to get his bedroom back from his grandpa

Steve Mayer and Billy Alston two of Peter's friends who offer support and ideas during the war

Vocabulary

diabolical very wicked

Machiavelli an Italian prince known for his political strategies

meander to wander

mope to be gloomy and depressed

olfactory having to do with the sense of smell

psychological having to do with the mind or emotions

Synopsis

Fifth-grader Peter Stokes finds out from his sister that his grandpa is coming to live with his family. That sounds great, except for one important detail: Grandpa is moving into Peter's room.

Peter tries to understand how sad his grandpa has become since Grandma died, but he is not ready to give up his room--a room he has lived in all his life, a room he loves. Unable to convince his parents that Grandpa should live in the guest bedroom on the top floor of the house, Peter has no choice but to let Grandpa know he is declaring war to get his room back.

Peter and his friends, Steve and Billy, devise several outrageous plans and tricks to make Grandpa surrender his room. Grandpa receives a typed "Declaration of War" stating he has twenty-four hours to give back Peter's room, or the war will begin. Grandpa, however, has other plans. From the moment Grandpa awakens to his alarm clock going off at three a.m., the two share a humorous and honest battle. Peter takes Grandpa's slippers; Grandpa hides Peter's Monopoly pieces. It is only when Peter realizes he has gone too far that the war takes a serious turn.

The family learns the importance of talking things out, Grandpa begins to cope with his sadness, and Peter learns the seriousness and consequences of war. Peter shares his story as a humorously written narrative assignment for his teacher.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

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Initial Understanding

Peter's dad tells him growing up isn't easy. What does he mean?

The correct answer should include concepts such as: maturity brings about difficult choices and decisions; things occur in life that aren't always easy to understand; fairness to one isn't necessarily fairness to all.

Literary Analysis

What does Peter become aware of during the course of the story?

Answers might include the ideas that war isn't fun, people can get hurt, and one shouldn't always listen to friends.

Inferential Comprehension

Why do you think Peter ended the war when he saw Grandpa without his teeth?

He realized he had really played a dirty trick on Grandpa. He felt ashamed of his actions and finally understood war can end up getting bigger and meaner before it's over.

Constructing Meaning

Explain one time where you fought your own "war" with someone. How does it compare to Peter's war with his grandpa?

Answers will vary but should include concepts such as conflict, fighting, power, fairness, winning and losing.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Plot The story's main problem focuses on the fight between Peter and Grandpa over Peter's bedroom. Grandpa is moving into Peter's home, and the most logical place for him to stay is Peter's bedroom. Peter doesn't understand why it has to be his room and feels it's very unfair. He tries to convince his parents there are other options, such as the third-floor guestroom, but Grandpa's weak legs make that

improbable. Thus, war is declared and Peter tries many outrageous stunts to convince Grandpa to give up the bedroom. Tell students to put themselves in Peter's place. What would they do in the same situation? What other options might they come up with in regards to where Grandpa could stay. Do they think Peter has the right to be angry? Would they be angry? How far would they go to get back something very important to them? Have them outline the steps they might take to convince their parents Grandpa should stay somewhere else in the house.

Understanding Literary Features Several themes underlie the story, including ideas that war isn't a game, people can get hurt, one shouldn't always listen to friends, and conflicts can escalate and become very destructive. Have students write a different ending to the story. What if Peter hadn't felt ashamed of his actions? What if his parents had discovered what he was doing? What if others had become involved? If Grandpa had given in right away, what may have happened to him? What would Peter have grown up to be like if he continued to pursue what he wanted in the same manner as his "war" with Grandpa?

Understanding Characterization Throughout the story, Grandpa makes it clear what he thinks about war. Have the students find/list other stories, whether fact or fiction, and detail how war is depicted in those books. Is Peter and Grandpa's fight truly a "war"? What generalizations can be made about war? How is this story different from other "war" stories? How is it similar?

Understanding the Author's Craft The story is told by Peter as a narrative writing assignment for his fifth-grade teacher. His assignment is to write a story about something important that happened to him and to tell it "real and true." Discuss with students the techniques behind narrative writing and have them submit such an assignment. Brainstorm topics they might write about. Discuss what makes Peter's writing interesting to read. For example, it is humorous; it is a personal account; it is relevant to their age level. Discuss

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the possibilities of retelling the story from Grandpa's point of view. How would the story change? Would the students have enjoyed the book if Grandpa had told the story?