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ROBYN REPORTS: THE ELECTION

By
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A Story From Hot Topics Hot Serials

Teacher's Guide

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Introduction:

This guide offers you chapter-by-chapter lesson plans and activities to enhance the learning experience as your students read the story. For each chapter you'll find a summary of the chapter, a vocabulary list, comprehension questions, a writing prompt, and a newspaper activity for integrating newspaper use into the unit. The questions and assignments are written directly to students so that you can use them as written.

Summary of the story:

Robyn Zimmerman is a young reporter with a big assignment. It's Election Day and she is covering the neighborhood election for her very own newspaper, "The Robyn Report." And, what an assignment it is! From the candidates' debate on the issues to the community referendum about the statue in the local park, to the catastrophe of the missing ballot box, Robyn and her band of young reporters are investigating and writing about each. Along the way they'll learn a great deal about how elections work, political parties, debates, and the importance of informed citizenship and voting.

Chapter One: Wake Up Call**Summary:**

Robyn is a young girl who produces a weekly neighborhood newspaper – *The Robyn Report*. She oversleeps on the most important day of the year, Election Day. She and her reporters rush to the park to investigate the protesters there.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word or phrase in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

blurry - something that is hazy

sixth sense - a power of perception beyond the five senses; intuition

approval - a feeling of liking something

subscribers - people who contract to receive and pay for a certain number of issues of a publication

investigate - examine in detail

chanting - a rhythmic call or shout

Comprehension Check:

1. Why did Robyn stay up until 2:00 P.M.? She stayed up until 2:00 P.M. because she was planning for Election Day.
2. What supplies do Robyn and her reporters take with them to write the day's stories? They take a notebook, a camera, and a tape recorder.
3. What are the people at the park doing? The people are holding signs and chanting, "Down with Robyn! Fly away! Down with Robyn! Do not stay!"

Newspaper Activity:

This week's issue of *The Robyn Report* will be all about the election. That is the most important story of the week in that community. Allow your students time to look at your

local newspaper and have them find an article that is related to an election. Facilitate a discussion about what makes elections so important. Students can write paragraphs telling why they think so.

Writing Prompt:

If you were going to start your own newspaper, what would you write about? What do you think a good newspaper should include?

Learning standards:

analyzing, writing for fluency

Chapter Two: Robin vs. Robyn

Summary:

Robyn and her reporters are covering the neighborhood on Election Day. The town is deciding whether to keep the giant statue of the American robin in the park or replace it with a fountain.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

- protesting - To object to, especially in a formal statement
- foundation - the basis or groundwork of anything
- exaggerating - to magnify beyond the limits of truth; overstate
- screeches - A high-pitched cry
- immediately - without lapse of time; without delay; instantly; at once

Comprehension Check:

1. What did Robyn's sister teach her about reporting? Robyn's sister taught her that it doesn't matter what you think; you report the truth.
2. What is the great debate in the town? Some people like the giant American robin statue in the park and some people don't.
3. What does it say on Mrs. Allen's sign? It reads, "BIRD IS THE WORD. SAVE OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS."

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn is covering her first protest about whether to replace the statue of the robin with a fountain. If you were voting in the election, would you support the bird or the fountain? Can you find an important issue being debated in today's newspaper? Explain the issue and write 3 reasons why you support the issue. Then take a close look at the other point of view and list 3 reasons supporting that side.

Writing Prompt:

The disagreement over the statue is causing the people in the Robyn's neighborhood to argue. Write about a time when people in your neighborhood had a dispute and how they behaved toward each other.

Learning standards:

justifying a personal perspective, understanding point of view

Chapter Three: The Great Debate

Summary: The Great Debate between the candidates for neighborhood president starts and is interrupted by a stalker on a skateboard.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

polls - the place where votes are taken; a sampling or collection of opinions on a subject

candidates - people who seek or are nominated for an office

tradition - a time-honored practice or set of such practices

promptly - done, performed, delivered, etc., at once or without delay

constructive - serving to improve or advance; helpful

enthusiasm - great excitement for or interest in a subject or cause

Comprehension Check:

1. One of Robyn's reporters yelled "Ripe apple!" What does that mean? It means that there is breaking news and the reporter must do three things – stop, drop, and report.
2. Who are the candidates running for president of the Neighborhood Association?
The candidates are Andrew Marx and Sally Palooso.
3. What are some of the important decisions the neighborhood president must decide?
The president must decide when trick or treating and the neighborhood block party will be held, how neighborhood fees will be spent, and whether to build a skate park.

Newspaper Activity:

Even though Robyn is in favor of the skate park, she is going to report only the facts and not give her opinion. Select a story from your newspaper and underline any facts in the article. Then circle all the statements in the same story that you believe to be opinions. What conclusions can you draw from this exercise?

Writing Prompt:

If you were covering the Great Debate for *The Robyn Report*, how would you write the story? What would the headline be? Write a headline and a story about what happened at the debate. Read your story aloud and compare them to others in your class.

Learning standards:

understanding facts and opinions, drawing conclusions

Chapter Four: The Search is On

Summary:

Robyn is trying to find the identity of the skateboarding “streaker” when suddenly she sees a group of skaters coming right at her.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

uproar - a state of commotion and noise and confusion

hoodlums - a tough, often aggressive or violent youth

snitch - an informer

object - to express or feel disapproval, dislike

rumble - a deep, heavy, somewhat muffled, continuous sound

Comprehension Check:

1. What is the *Robyn Report* motto? The *Robyn Report* motto is, “Day or night, we’ll get it right.”
2. How does J.P. work his magic? First J.P. earns Mike’s trust and then he asks him questions.
3. What is the rumbling that Robyn hears? The rumbling is a huge group of skaters speeding through the parking lot, aiming at her.

Newspaper Activity:

The candidates for the neighborhood election are answering a question about the proposed skate park. What other questions do you think should be asked of the candidates? Look in the newspaper and find someone in the news you would like to question. Is this person running for office? Draw up a list of questions would you like to ask.

Writing Prompt:

Robyn teaches her reporters to gain the trust of the person they are interviewing. Why is it important to earn someone’s trust in any relationship? Write a paragraph describing what you might do to gain someone’s trust.

Learning standards:

generating questions, interviewing the public

Chapter Five: The Search Continues

Summary:

While Robyn and J.P. are investigating the stalker story, they find out that the ballot box is missing.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

interview - a conversation in which a writer or reporter asks questions of one or more persons

mumbles - to speak words indistinctly, as by lowering the voice or partially closing the mouth

anonymous - of unknown name; whose name is withheld

credible - capable of being believed

Comprehension Check:

1. Why does Robyn decide to vote for Mrs. Palooso? Robyn decides to vote for Mrs. Palooso because the sidewalks are not very big for skating and the kids need a skateboard park. Mrs. Palooso supports the park.
2. Why is Robyn surprised that Alex Martinez is the stalker? Robyn is surprised because Alex is one of the quietest and shiest kids in the neighborhood.
3. Why are the people still arguing? They are still arguing because the ballot box is gone.

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn does not want to use an anonymous source for her story because her story will lack credibility. She wants to use her source's name and be on the record in her report. Look through your newspaper and read one of the stories. Make a list of all the sources for the story.

Writing Prompt:

Robyn has a set of rules for reporting. Can you think of a set of rules you have created for something you do? Write a paragraph telling why it is important to have rules to follow.

Learning standard:

locating information

Chapter Six: Looking for Clues

Summary:

The ballot box was stolen. Robyn thinks she knows who took the missing ballot box.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

approval - a feeling of liking something or someone good

investigators - One, especially a detective, who investigates

volunteers - to do charitable or helpful work without pay

mystery - something that baffles understanding and cannot be explained

practical joker - a person who plays tricks

Comprehension Check:

1. Why did Andre Allen and Rose Feliz get stuck in the voting booth? They got stuck in the voting booth because they both wanted to be the first one to vote and they squeezed in.
2. What does Elle enjoy doing? She likes writing poetry and playing practical jokes.
3. What clue did Corinna find? Corinna found a piece of paper with a silly rhyme on it.

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn believes that someone stole the ballot box and she is trying to solve the case. Look through your newspaper for any crime stories. Read the story and find the five W's and an H about the crime--who, what, when, where, why, and how. Write your own crime story. Is crime a big problem in your neighborhood?

Writing Prompt:

Robyn was quick to realize that the paper with the silly rhyme might be an important clue even though Corinna threw it in the trash. That may be because Robyn is a good reporter and reporters must be very observant. What other attributes should a good reporter have? Find a news story in your newspaper that was written by a local reporter you think is a good writer. See if you can figure out what questions he or she might have asked in researching that story.

Learning standards:

summarizing, locating important information

Chapter Seven: Rhyme Time

Summary:

Robyn has figured out that Mrs. McMillan's mother probably took the missing ballot box, but now both are missing.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

release - to let go; to free from confinement

accuse - to charge with the fault

suspect - to think (a person) guilty without proof

direction - a line leading to a place or point

Comprehension Check:

1. Why does Corinna think that Elle did not steal the ballot box? She thinks Elle didn't steal the ballot box because Elle is the oldest person in the neighborhood.
2. Where do Robyn, Corinna and Mrs. McMillan go to look for Elle? They look for her at the library.
3. Why does Mrs. McMillan look like she might cry? She looks like she might cry because her mother is missing.

Newspaper Activity:

Perhaps there is a rush to the voting booth because the voters are anxious to elect leaders to solve important community problems. These problems are sometimes called issues. Issues are those ideas that people or candidates feel strongly about. Popular issues are: education, environment, health care, taxes, the economy, war and peace. Discuss with your class some of your issues or concerns.

What are some of the problems or issues in your state or country? Use the newspaper to find stories about some issues that might be of interest during an election. Write each issue on the line and then rank them in order of importance to you. (Number one is the most important.) Talk about them with your class.

Writing Prompt:

Robyn has accused Elle of stealing the ballot box. How do you think Elle will react? Have you ever been caught doing something you should not have been doing? How did that make you feel?

Learning standards:

understanding rules and laws, summarizing

Chapter Eight: On With the Election

Summary:

The ballot box is recovered and the voting takes place. The election appears to be very close.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

fault - responsibility for failure or a wrongful act

anxious - uneasiness because of fear of danger or misfortune

referendum - a vote by the general public on a bill or some other important issue

underway - in progress

exits - a passage or way out

private - personal and not publicly expressed

compare - to examine (two or more ideas etc.) in order to note similarities and differences

Comprehension Check:

1. What sport did Elle play and when did she play it? Elle played basketball in the 1930s.
2. What are the voters voting for in the park referendum? If they vote for the park referendum then they want a new fountain and if they vote against it, they want to keep the bird statue.
3. What are Logan and J.P. covering? Logan is covering Mrs. Paloosa's election party. J.P. is covering Mr. Marx's election party.

Newspaper Activity:

Corinna and Robyn poll the voters to find out which candidate is most likely to win. A poll, also called a survey, is a series of questions designed to find out what people think about a candidate or an issue. Polls do not ask every voter a question. Instead, a sample of voters is chosen. Their answers are believed to represent the feelings of the larger group. Polls are not always accurate because people do change their minds as they get more information. But, during election time, you will hear a great deal about the polls. Look in the newspaper for the results of a poll and write your conclusions.

Writing Prompt:

Take a poll in your class about each person's choice in an upcoming election. Draw a bar graph showing the results. Then write a summary explaining the results of the polling.

Learning standards:

drawing conclusions, understanding surveys

Chapter Nine: Every Vote Counts

Summary:

The results of the neighborhood election have just been announced. The results are close.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

deadline - the point in time at which something must be completed

exceptions – persons not included

glares - to stare angrily

remove - to move to another place; to take away

Comprehension Check:

1. Why does Mr. Phillips say the reporters can't vote? He says they can't vote because they need to check in 5 minutes before the voting deadline.
2. How is Robyn able to vote? Robyn gets a copy of the neighborhood association handbook and Mr. Phillips cannot find the rule that says you have to be checked in 5 minutes before voting.
3. Why does Robyn vote "no" on the park referendum? She decides to support her fellow robin.

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn's neighborhood's election is a close one. In that community every vote is important, even the kids' votes. When the U.S. was formed in 1776, voting was limited to white men, 21 years and older who owned land or were wealthy. Later, in the late 1800's, men of other races were also allowed to vote. Women were not allowed to vote until 1920. Imagine that you lived in the United States during the year 1800 and only rich white men were allowed to vote. Read some letters to the editor in today's newspaper so that you can see how they are written. Then write a letter to the editor telling why everyone should be allowed to vote.

Writing Prompt:

Mr. Phillips is a friend of Mr. Marx and tries to prevent Robyn and her staff from voting. Why doesn't he want the kids to vote in this election? How far would you go to support your friend? Would you do something dishonest? Write about it.

Learning standards:

understanding political behavior, writing to inform or persuade,

Chapter Ten: Down for the Count

Summary:

This chapter is *The Robyn Report* newspaper.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

disaster - an event resulting in great loss and misfortune

exclusive - a piece of news obtained by a newspaper along with the privilege of using it first

encourage - to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence

recount - a second or additional count, as of votes in an election

honored - to show respect for

Comprehension Check:

1. Why did Dorothy want to keep the robin statue? Dorothy wanted to keep the statue because she thought removing the statue would drive the birds away.
2. Why did the stalker say he jumped up on the stage? He said he wanted to encourage the other kids in the neighborhood to get out and vote.
3. Who is the new president of the Neighborhood Association? Sally Palooso is the new president of the Neighborhood Association.

Newspaper Activity

Voting is a way of stating your preference or making a choice. Voting is the foundation of democracy because a democracy is a government in which the people make choices about the way they live.

Look through today's newspaper to find a story you think you would not find in a newspaper from a country that was not a democracy. Write a paragraph telling why that story would not appear in a country that was not free.

Writing Prompt:

How does *The Robyn Report* serve the needs of its neighborhood? How does your local newspaper serve your community? Why do we need newspapers? What is their value in society?

Learning standards:

understanding the rights and responsibilities in a democracy, writing to persuade

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