Nate the Great Goes Undercover
by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Amateur detective, Nate the Great, has his first night case—to find out who is raiding his pesky neighbor Oliver’s garbage can. Though the list of suspects is long—including Rosamond’s cats and all the shrews, moles, skunks, birds, and raccoons in the neighborhood—he goes undercover (literally) and finally narrows the suspects down to one.

THEMES
problem-solving, persistence, cleverness, humor

I. PRE-TEACHING
A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
detective, pancakes, pest, garbage, snatcher, neighborhood, hungry, strange, thousand, hamburger, relish, doughnuts, spaghetti, pretzels, artichokes, walnuts, cauliflower, wafers, salmon, liver, yawn, important, library, Strigiformes, Caprimulgiformes, shrews, opossums, doghouse, raccoons, crunch, crackle, klunk, telephone, creeping, field, mothballs

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:
1. If you were a detective, what crimes would you solve?
2. Is there anything going on in your neighborhood or at school that might need a detective to solve? Would you like to be that detective?
3. If something was raiding your garbage can, what steps would you take to find out what it was?

II. PRESENTATION
A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with pages 7 - 17: What is unusual about this case? When does it start? How had Nate gotten his dog Sludge? Why do he and Sludge walk faster when Oliver comes out of his house? What does Oliver tell them? How does he know? What does Nate volunteer to do for Oliver? What does Oliver need help with? Who does Nate say is snatching the garbage? When does Nate say he’ll solve the mystery? What does he tell Sludge to do? What does he ask Rosamond? What does she reply? What does she say when he asks if her cats eat garbage?
2. Advance to pages 18 - 32: What does he wonder when he sees Esmeralda’s mouth open? What does he ask her? What does she reply? What does Nate decide about Esmeralda? What important clue has she given him? What has Nate found out? How has he narrowed the suspects? What does he learn at the library? Why does he eliminate the Strigiformes and the Caprimulgiformes? Who are the suspects he has come up with? What does his note to his mother say? Where does he spend the night? Why does he change his mind? Where does he think he’ll hide next? What does he find in the garbage can? What sounds does he hear?
3. Complete the story with pages 33 - 47: What kind of animal does he see? What does it do? What is Nate’s solution? How does he spend most of the next day? What does Nate say? What is Sludge doing that’s strange? What does his note to his mother say? Where does he spend the night? Who comes to the can? Why is Nate not surprised? Why does he think Sludge has become the garbage snatcher? When will Sludge become a great detective? What does pleasant sounds does Nate hear as he is resting? What does he decide about night cases?

B. For Discussion:
1. Describe the process Nate goes through to investigate the crime. In what ways is this similar to what other detectives do, according to television or other stories?
2. In what ways does Nate decide detective work is not just fun and games?
3. What are some of the false leads Nate comes up with? How does he feel when his realizes he’s made a mistake?
4. At what point does Nate realize who the culprit is? How does he prove it?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON
Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:
A. Language Arts:
1. Have students write another case that Nate might solve, such as finding out who left a corner of the room in a mess, who borrowed a book and didn’t return it, who hid the teacher’s glasses.
2. As students listen to the tape, have them list as many of the foods that Rosamond mentions as they can. Hold a contest to see who can remember the most.
3. Discuss the tone of Nate’s narration, comparing it to the hard-boiled detective writing of certain mystery stories.
Bring in something by Raymond Chandler, Robert B. Parker, or other hard-boiled detective writers and read a few pages. Then have the class compare this to how Nate speaks.

4. A detective needs to be alert to everything going on around him. Have students take a minute and listen without talking, then write down as many sounds as they can hear. Then have them do the same for smells, for textures, and for one color. Then discuss the experience. What is it like to really concentrate on the senses? Why don’t we pay attention to these more often?

5. Read aloud from the opening of *Something Queer is Going On* by Elizabeth Levy and *The Mystery of the Blue Ring* by Patricia Reilly Giff. Have students compare these with the opening of *Nate the Great Goes Undercover*.

6. Have students write a tribute to their pet, or if they don’t have one, about a pet they’d like to have and why.

7. When Nate is in the garbage can, he hears sounds like “Crunch,” “Crackle,” “Klunk.” Have students think about how these sounds sound. Have them notice that they sound just like what they are and then talk about onomatopoeia. What other sounds like this can they think of?

**B. Art and Music:**

1. Have students select background music that might be appropriate to some of the scenes. They might find the theme music for the old Alfred Hitchcock TV show (“The Funeral March of the Marionettes”) or use the theme music from a current TV show like *Law and Order*.

2. Have students make a bulletin board of Nate solving the crime. They might draw pictures of Nate and the other characters and cut footprints out of the black paper to trace his trail as he solves the crime.

3. Have a group make up a detective board game like *Clue* for the class to play.

**C. Social Studies:**

1. Have students brainstorm some problems at school that need solving. Then form them into groups to discuss ways to solve this problem. Assign one student in each group to write down and report on what is discussed.

2. Have students learn about how police detectives go about solving a crime. You might invite someone from the police department in to talk about law enforcement.

3. In some towns, dogs need to be kept behind fences or on leashes so they can’t get into garbage cans or cause other problems. Have students find out the laws in their town and then talk about why such laws exist.

**D. Science and Math:**

1. Have students talk about their pets. What kind of pet is best and why? What are the special characteristics of cats, dogs, and other animals that make them good pets?

2. Have students find out about the night animals mentioned in the story like Strigiformes, Caprimulgiformes, cats, rats, bats, mice, shrews, moles, skunks, opossums, and raccoons.

3. Have students name their favorite foods the way Rosamond does. Then have them do the same for the foods they really hate. Finally, have them find out which of these foods are good for them and which are not.

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Nate the Great

by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Nate the Great is a detective. He solves mysteries, like finding balloons, books, chickens, and goldfish. When his friend Annie asks him to find her missing picture, he sets to work, asking her questions, digging in the yard, visiting Rosamond and her four cats, and getting painted red by Annie’s little brother. To keep up his strength, he stops frequently to eat his favorite meal, pancakes.

THEMES
mystery, pets, persistence, logic

I. PRE-TEACHING
A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
detective, breakfast, juice, telephone, diamonds, pearls, million, dollars, picture, balloons, slippers, chickens, goldfish, itches, scratch, suit, notebook, rubbers, painted, yesterday, trails, trapdoors, passages, squeaks, yellow, comfortable, wastebasket, count, teeth, sniffed, bury, buries, leash, hungry, smart, strength, hex, strange, jumped, tripped, paintbrush, laugh, clown, monster, doorknob, question, answer, orange, solved, wearing

B. Before beginning the story, discuss with the class the following questions:
1. Would you like to be a detective? What kinds of mysteries would you solve? What would you need to do to solve them?
2. Have you ever lost anything? How did you go about finding it?
3. What is your favorite food? Would you like to eat this food all the time? Why or why not?

II. PRESENTATION
A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with pages 1-20: What does Nate have for breakfast? Who calls him? What has she lost? What does he like about Annie? What is Annie doing when Nate arrives? What is the picture she has lost? What does Nate tell her? What does he ask her first? What is Annie’s room like? What does it say about her? Where does he look?
2. Advance to pages 21-40: What does Nate find in the wastebasket? Why does Annie know it isn’t her picture? What does Nate notice as Fang buries a bone? What do they find when they dig in the yard? What don’t they find? What does Nate say they need to do next? What does Rosamond ask him to do? What is the lost cat’s name? How many cats does she have? What are their names? What does Nate notice about Annie’s house?
3. Complete the story with pages 41-61: How does Nate find Superhex? Who does he suggest they see next? What has Harry painted? What does Nate suddenly announce? What has he noticed about the picture of the monster? What does he tell Annie about mixing paints? How does Annie feel about what her brother has done? What does she decide she will do? Why is Nate glad he is wearing his rubbers?

B. For Discussion:
1. How does Nate prove he is dedicated to his job as a detective?
2. What questions does Nate ask Annie? How do these questions help him solve the mystery?
3. Why do they dig up the yard?
4. Why do they go to Rosamond’s house? How does Nate know she didn’t take the picture?
5. How does Nate suddenly know that Harry took Annie’s picture?

III EXTENDING THE LESSON
Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:
A. Language Arts:
1. Have students write a story about another case Nate could solve, such as those he mentions about finding missing balloons, books, slippers, chickens, and goldfish.
2. Have students write about their own pet cat, dog, or other animal. What’s fun about having a pet? What is involved in caring for a pet? Students who do not have pets can write about a pet they would like to have and why.
3. When Nate puts on his detective suit, he looks like another famous detective, Sherlock Holmes. Have students learn about Sherlock Holmes. You might find one of his stories to read or tell to the class.

B. Art and Music
1. Have students select background music that might be appropriate to some of the scenes. Have them find detective music from a TV show or perhaps the theme
from the Alfred Hitchcock TV show, “The Funeral March of the Marionettes.”

2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They might find pictures of pancakes, pile them high on the board, draw pictures of Rosamond’s four black cats, each a different size, of Fang burying a bone, and of the pictures Harry paints.

3. Have students learn about how blending colors makes a new color. They could work with watercolors, poster paint, or acrylics. Have them start with the three primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. Discuss what “primary” means. Then have them mix yellow with blue to make green, red with yellow to make orange, and red with blue to make purple. They might try mixing other colors to see what they get.

4. Have students choose a “color of the day” and see how many things they can find that are that color.

5. Annie’s room is done in yellow because that’s her favorite color. Have students talk about their own rooms. What is the main color? Why? You might show them the painting by Vincent Van Gogh called “Bedroom at Arles” and have them compare this with the picture of Annie’s room. Why would Annie like this bedroom?

C. Social Studies:

1. Nate is able to solve his mysteries because he is good at noticing things, like Fang digging and that one of Harry’s pictures is orange. Have students learn to observe details, such as things they see on the way to school or while they are on a bus or eating lunch in the lunchroom. Have them list five things that they notice that they’ve never noticed before. Have them share their lists and talk about how it feels to see things they haven’t noticed before.

2. Another reason Nate is good at solving mysteries is that he learns from his mistakes. When they dig up the yard and don’t find the picture, he doesn’t give up. When they go to Rosamond’s house and don’t find the picture, he keeps on working on the case. Talk with students about mistakes and how we can learn from them. You might find the stories of famous inventors, such as how many different ways Thomas Edison tried before he succeeded in inventing the light bulb.

3. Nate asks Annie if her house has a trapdoor or a secret passage. Have students find out what a trapdoor is. Do they know of any houses that have these or secret passages? Why would someone want a secret passage?

D. Science and Math:

1. Have students make a simple flow chart of how Nate goes about solving the case of the missing picture. What does he ask Annie first? Where does he have her take him? Where does he look? Where do they go next?

2. Detectives sometimes use magnifying glasses to see things better. Have students use a magnifying glass to look at things around the room. How does it help them see things better? How does a magnifying glass work?

3. Have students find out why dogs bury bones.

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Nate the Great and the Halloween Hunt

by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

It's Halloween night and Nate the Great finds himself in a haunted house hunting for Rosamond's lost cat, Little Hex. He tells himself he isn't scared of haunted houses and doesn't believe in ghosts, but when he hears creaking, clanking, and shrieking, he begins to worry. With his trusty dog Sludge and a few pancakes to help him think, he unravels the clues and solves the Halloween mystery.

THEMES
- ghosts, fear, friendship, mysteries, pets, Halloween

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
- detective, haunted, witches, clowns, Dracula, princesses, doorbell, bonnet, shawl, grandmother, holiday, crawled, ghosts, goblins, basket, heavy, napkin, hex, haunted, tomorrow, worried, tonight, costume, special, biscuits, gorilla, noticed, everywhere, probably, escaped, flashlight, pirates, artichoke, robot, monsters, creaked, squeaked, slunk, creaking, clanking, shrieking, glowing, disappeared, huddled, unwrapped, heavy, twice, stroked, celebrate, collected

B. Before beginning the story, discuss with the class the following questions:
1. Do you like Halloween? What happens on Halloween? What did you wear for trick or treating last year? What do you think you'll wear this year?
2. Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not?
3. What makes someone good at solving a mystery?
4. Have you ever lost a pet? What did you do to find it? Were you able to find it?
5. What things are you afraid of? What are some ways you handle your fears?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with Nate telling how he got in trouble: What are he and his dog Sludge looking for out the window? What does he suddenly hear? Who is standing at the door? What does Nate think about Halloween now? What does he ask Fang? What does Fang do? Who comes to the door next? What are they wearing? What does Annie say about Fang? What does Rosamond ask Nate to do? What questions does he ask her? When was the last time she saw Little Hex? Where did Little Hex follow her? What did she help Esmeralda with? What does Nate think might have happened? What does he say in his note to his mother?
2. Continue with Nate going out with Sludge to find Little Hex: What does Nate bring along to help in the search? Who does he see? What do they tell him? Where does he decide they must look next? What is scary about the house? What does Nate see? What does he call out? What happens? What does he decide about haunted houses? What does he see creeping toward him? Who does he realize it is? How does Sludge help him find the way out? What do they go home to get?
3. Complete the story with Nate deciding some mysteries are better left unsolved. Where does Nate decide they must go next? What does Esmeralda say about her treat basket? Where does Nate find Little Hex? What does he tell Rosamond? What has happened to her treats? How does he say Sludge gave him the clue? What helped Nate figure out where Little Hex was? How does Rosamond want to celebrate? Who will be invited? What mystery does Nate decide is better left unsolved?

B. For Discussion:
1. How does Nate go about solving the mystery? What are some of his techniques? Why does he ask so many questions? What does he figure out from what Rosamond tells him? What does he learn from the pirates? How does Sludge help him solve it?
2. Why does Nate go to the haunted house?
3. What is the first hint about the solution to the mystery? How does Nate work out the answer?
4. At what point does Nate decide he's solved the case? How does Sludge help him figure out where Little Hex has gone?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

A. Language Arts:
1. Have students listen the way the author sets the scary scene, such as mentioning “big teeth, “glowing eyes” and “creaking, clanking, and shrieking.” How does this make the story creepy? Have students come up with other things that would help set a scary scene.
2. Have students write an entry Nate might make in his detective's notebook. How would he report on the case of the Halloween hunt?
3. Have students read a version of “Red Riding Hood.” How would the grandmother be dressed? They might try writing or telling a version of the story from the point of view of the grandmother or even of the wolf.

4. Have students read other Nate the Great books like Nate the Great Goes Undercover, Nate the Great and the Phony Clue, or Nate the Great and the Snowy Trail.

What are some ways Nate solves mysteries? Ask students if they think they’d like to be a detective like Nate.

5. Have students write a story or a poem about a visit to a haunted house.

6. Have students read Nate’s note to his mother and discuss what she might think when she reads it.

B. Art and Music:

1. Have students select background music that might be appropriate to some of the scenes. Have them listen to scary music like Moussorgsky’s “Night on Bare Mountain,” or “Dance Macabre” by Saint-Saens.

2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They might cut out a large haunted house shape and put it against an orange background, show a black cat, include white cloths to represent the sheets, show Nate with his deerstalker hat and flashlight, the three sets of glowing eyes he sees, add baskets covered with napkins, Halloween treats, and other items mentioned in the story.

3. Have students make or find recordings of haunted house sounds. Have them come up with ways to make sounds like creaking steps or clinking and clanking noises.

4. Have students design a costume to wear for Halloween.

5. Have students dress up a pet for Halloween.

C. Social Studies:

1. Have students find out more about Halloween. Why do we celebrate Halloween? What does “Halloween” mean? Why do we dress up and go trick-or-treating?

2. Have students talk about houses in their neighborhood they think are haunted. Why do they think these houses might be haunted?

3. Have students find out why black cats are associated with Halloween.

4. Rosamond has named her cat “Hex.” Have students find out what a hex is. Why would she name her black cat this?

5. Some of the kids Nate is waiting for come dressed as Dracula. Have students find out who Dracula was. What was scary about him?

D. Science and Math:

1. Nate says pancakes help him think. Have students learn more about what goes into a pancake. What makes them taste good? What might not be so healthy about pancakes?

2. Have students think about what might cause clinking, clanking, and shrieking in a house. What other sounds do houses make?

3. When Nate is in the haunted house, he sees three sets of eyes glowing in the dark. Have students find out how and why cats’ eyes glow in the dark.

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When Nate the Great discovers the recipe for his mother's Monster Cookies is missing, he and Sludge set out to find it, uncovering long and short clues, crinkly, wrinkly clues, and fishy, fangy clues. But which clues will solve the mystery and what about the mess he makes along the way?

**THEMES**
- mystery, humor, friends, cooking, family,
- pets, problem-solving

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
- detective, scribbles, recipe monster, strawberry,
- Draculas, chocolate, Frankenstiens, cinnamon,
- werewolves, pancakes, kitchen, written, crinkled,
- wrinkled, stained, dozens, spread, either,
- discovered, nook and cranny, knocked, crumbled,
- jumbled, stained, tasty, staring, pocketbook, pest,
- eels, fishy, favorite, grocery, supermarket, counter,
- stained, recycle, disgusted, answers, package, breathe,
- anymore, copied, thumbed, cupboard, important,
- bought, scream, thud

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:
1. How do detectives solve crimes? How do they find clues? Do you think you'd like to be a detective?
2. Have you ever lost anything? How did you go about finding it? What are some good ways to keep from losing things?
3. Do you like cookies? What are your favorite kinds?
4. Do you enjoy monster movies? Who are your favorite monsters?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with Chapters 1 - 3: What does Nate's mother's note say? Where does Nate decide to look first? Why is he glad he can solve the mystery by staying inside? Where does his mother write her short recipes? Where does she write her long ones? Why doesn't his mother like the long pieces of paper? Why does Nate think the recipe will be easy to find? What are some of the recipes he finds? How long might the recipe have been missing? Where do he and Sludge look for it?
2. Advance to Chapters 4 - 6: What does Annie do when Nate meets her? Where does Sludge lead him next? Why does he think Oliver is a pest? How does Oliver keep track of the people he follows? Where had Nate's mother gone when Oliver followed her? What does this tell Nate? Why does Rosamond want to charge for her answers?
3. Complete the story with Chapters 7 - 9: Why does Nate think he's solved the case? What does he think when he learns his mother didn't buy cinnamon at the supermarket? How does he decide he is wrong? What does he "feel in his bones" about the fish paper? Where does he find the recipe for Monster Cookies? How had it gotten lost? What causes his mother to scream when she comes home?

B. For Discussion:
1. How does Nate follow each clue to solve the mystery? At what point is he wrong about what he figures out? How does he react when he realizes he is wrong?
2. How does stopping to go over what he has learned so far help Nate solve the case?
3. What does he learn when he stays inside? What does he learn when he goes outside? Why does he feel he needs to do both?
4. What mistake has Nate's mother made about the recipe?
5. What does Nate mean when he says, "Nothing would have been better than something"?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:**

A. Language Arts:
1. Have students discuss how they would go about finding a lost item, like Nate's mother's recipe. One group might hide something and have another group try to find it. One student might take notes on how they go about it.
2. Have students learn more about Mary Shelly who wrote Frankenstein. Who was she? What made her decide to write this story? She says she wrote it after a scary dream. Have students talk about some scary dreams they have had. They might try writing a scary story inspired by a dream.
3. Have students share the monster jokes in the back of the book and see if they can think up other jokes about Dracula and Frankenstein.
4. While looking for the recipe, Nate finds some funny names of foods. Have students come up with funny names like this.

5. Have students listen for rhyming words, like crumbled, jumbled, and stumbled. What does each word mean? Students might make up a poem using these and other words that rhyme with them.

6. Have students play detective for a week. They could follow someone and write down what the person does, then report to class on what they learn about the person.

B. Art and Music:

1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. The theme from the Pink Panther might be appropriate when Nate is following clues. Theme music from monster movies might be appropriate for when Nate is talking about the cookies.

2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could show Nate with Sludge in the center of the board and cut cookies shaped like Frankensteins, werewolves, and vampires out of construction paper to put around the board.

3. Have students use the recipe in the back of the book to make “Lemon Fang Cookies.” Hold a monster party in class with green “monster” punch, the cookies, invitation and decorations. Have students come dressed as their favorite monster.

C. Social Studies:

1. Have students learn more about vampires. They could use the information in the back of the book or ask a librarian to help them find other information on the Internet or in a book. Where did the idea of such creatures originate? Why did people once believe in them?

2. Have students learn more about legends of scary creatures mentioned in the back of the book, like werewolves, Big Foot, Yeti, Mokelemembe, or others like the Loch Ness Monster. Why have people developed these stories about strange creatures?

3. Have students find out how their mothers keep recipes. Do they use cards? Papers? Recipe books?

D. Science and Math:

1. Have students make a flow chart of how Nate solves the mystery of the Monster Mess. What does he do first? How does each clue lead to the next one? How often does Nate go over what he has learned? How does this help him solve the crime?

2. Have students learn more about eels. Another group might learn about metamorphosis. Why do some creatures go through different stages like this?

3. Have students talk about how their family recycles. Why is recycling important?

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When a torn slip of paper with the mysterious letters VITA appears on Nate the Great’s doorstep, he and his faithful dog Sludge set out to solve the mystery.

**THEMES**
- mystery
- humor
- friends
- family
- pets
- problem-solving

### I. PRE-TEACHING

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
- solved, exercise, piece, dictionary, vitamin, message, mystery, sixteen, fitted, together, pocket, strange, doorstep, favorite, rips, scratches, slits, slashes, hex, branch, twig, reached, threw, grabbed, invitation, person, anyone, thought, o’clock, too, followed, sewer, sharp, beside, blank, facing, printed, backwards, perfect, wetter, empty, space, sunk, Atlantic, Pacific, ocean, testing, sink, exactly, gulped

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:
1. How do detectives solve crimes? How do they find clues? Do you think you’d like to be a detective?
2. Do you ever notice pieces of paper you see on the ground? What do you wonder about them?
3. Do you sometimes see posters and other notices? What do they say?

### II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story
1. Begin with pages 7 - 20: What is Nate doing when he finds the piece of paper? What does it say? What is the first thing he does to find out? What does he learn? What does he decide to do? Who does he decide might have torn up the paper? What does Rosamond say when he asks her? What does Nate see on a twig close to Big Hex? How does he get Big Hex out of the tree? What does he discover when he puts the two pieces together?
2. Advance to pages 21 – 33: What is the deadline for solving the case? What does Nate think about while he eats lunch? What does Finley ask him? What does Nate answer? What does Nate see on a twig close to Big Hex? How does he get Big Hex out of the tree? What does he discover when he puts the two pieces together?
3. Complete the tape with pages 34 – 48: What does Nate think he’s been doing wrong? What does he discover when he looks at the empty space? What is the missing piece shaped like? What will happen if he doesn’t find it before three o’clock? Where had he seen a boat? What does he discover when he looks at the poster? How does he know he has solved the case? What does Pip say? What does Finley say? Why do Nate and Sludge run all the way home?

### III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:**

A. Language Arts:
1. Have students find a piece of paper on the ground or in a wastebasket and use it to start a story.
2. The first thing Nate does when he begins the case is look up the word in the dictionary. Have students read a page of a dictionary and talk about what they learn. Discuss why dictionaries are helpful. How are they put together?
3. Have students listen to what Big Hex does with his claws—tears, rips, scratches, shreds, cuts, slits, and slashes. Discuss the difference between each word. Have students make up sentences, using each word.
4. Have students listen for the humor in the story, such as when Nate says if he doesn’t solve the mystery by three o’clock, he’s sunk. What kind of humor is this?
What is funny about the piece of paper in the sewer reading “phony clue”?

B. Art and Music:
1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. The theme from the Pink Panther might be appropriate when Nate is following clues.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could write the message on a large piece of paper, tear it into four pieces and put it on the board. They could add pictures of four black cats, the two dogs, the posters on the fence, and other items mentioned in the story.
3. Have students notice signs and other posted notices, then come back to class with a list. Have them create a poster advertising something going on in their neighborhood or at school.
4. Nate solves the mystery by looking at the empty space on the invitation and finding a shape. Have students try drawing the empty space around an object, instead of the object itself. How does this help them see it better?

C. Social Studies:
1. Have students find the Pacific and the Atlantic on a map and learn more about these oceans. Have them find other oceans. What is the difference between an ocean and a lake?
2. Rosamond has named each of her cats “Hex.” Have students find out what this word means. What is fitting to call a black cat “hex”? Why do some people consider black cats unlucky?
3. Have a group of students write a short message on a piece of paper, tear it into about six pieces and scatter them around the classroom or on the school grounds. Challenge the rest of the class to look for the clues, put them together, and solve the mystery.

D. Science and Math:
1. Have students make a flow chart of how Nate solves the mystery. What does he do first? How does each clue lead to the next one? How often does he go over what he has learned? What does he do when he makes a mistake? How does he learn to look at the problem from a different angle? How does this help him solve the crime?
2. Nate “wonders if Vita” could be “vitamin.” Have students find out about vitamins. Why are vitamins important to our health?
3. Rosamond has four cats and Nate figures out that means “sixteen claws.” Is he right? Why or why not? If he counted each claw on both front paws of each cat, how many claws would there be? If he also counted the claws on the back feet of each cat, how many claws would he come up with?
4. Nate knows both notes were written by Finley because of the way he writes his “r’s.” Have students analyze samples of handwriting and see if they can tell which were written by the same person.

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A Listening Library Study Guide

Nate the Great and the Missing Key
by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Nate the Great isn’t afraid of anything, except maybe Annie’s ferocious dog, Fang, but when Annie loses her house key and can’t get inside to set up the party she’s giving for Fang, Nate and his trusty dog, Sludge, are hot on the trail.

**THEMES**
humor, mystery, friends, pets, problem-solving, determination

**I. PRE-TEACHING**
A. These terms should be defined and discussed:
detective, birthday, fang, morning, bigger, sweater, collar, surprise, present, striped, license, silver, jingles, listen, strange, poem, parties, case (one a detective solves), shiny, doormat, drainpipe, mailbox, pest, solve, safety, badges, poison, eels, follow, all right, together, busy, bank, pennies, nickels, quarters, counters, guard, deposit, enough, kitchen, syrup, pancakes, hungry, forever, corners, garbage, sniffed, perfect, empty, slunk, knives, inches, including, honor

B. Consider the following questions:
1. How do detectives solve crimes? What are clues? How do clues help solve a mystery?
2. Is there anything you’re afraid of? What does it feel like to be afraid? What can you do about it?
3. Have you ever lost anything? How did you go about finding it? How would you suggest someone find something that is lost?
4. What kind of birthday party would you give to a pet? Who would you invite? What presents should they bring? What refreshments would you serve?

**II. PRESENTATION**
A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with Nate headed for the birthday party: What is the one thing he says he is afraid of? How can Nate tell Fang is ready for the party? Why has Annie come? What is her problem? What does Nate ask her first? What does she tell him? When was the last time Annie saw the key? What does Rosamond’s note say? Why can’t Annie ask Rosamond about her note? What is the next question Nate asks Annie? Why have Annie’s mother and father gone for the day? What does Nate tell his mother in his note?

2. Continue with Nate, Annie, Fang, and Sludge going to Annie’s house: What does the lost key look like? What are some of the places where the key might be found? Why do Nate and Annie go to Oliver’s house? What does Oliver tell them? What “big safe place” does Nate see? Why does he think the key would be there? What do they do when they go inside? What do they see on the floor? What does the guard ask them? Why does Nate decide this is not where he’ll find the key?

3. Complete the story with Nate thinking of a kitchen: What does Oliver tell him? How does Nate feel about what Oliver asks? What does Nate realize when he tries to get away from Oliver? When Nate looks for a fork, what does he discover? How does this solve the mystery? Where is the key? How is Nate rewarded for solving the case?

B. For Discussion:
1. Why doesn’t Nate like Oliver? What does he do to avoid him?
2. What questions does Nate ask Annie? How do these questions help him solve the mystery?
3. Trace the ways Nate solves the case. Which are planned? Which are not planned? Which clues lead nowhere? Which help solve the mystery?
4. Find places in the story that make you laugh. Why are these funny?

**III. EXTENDING THE LESSON**
Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:**
A. Language Arts:
1. Have students read the dedication. Why is a picture of a bird shown?
2. Have students listen to the presents Annie bought for Fang and see how many they can remember.
3. Have students listen to the things Oliver collects. Another group might listen to what Nate and his friends find when they crawl on the floor of the bank.
4. When Nate is looking for a fork, he solves the mystery. This kind of “accident” is called *serendipity*. Have students learn more about this word. Ask them if they have ever been looking for something and find something else.
5. Have students write a poem about things they are afraid of. What can we do to overcome our fears?
B. Art and Music:
1. Assign a group to select records, tapes, or CDs from the library that might serve as appropriate background music to some of the scenes. They might find soundtracks from well-known detective movies or television shows, like *The Funeral March of the Marionette*, used on the Alfred Hitchcock television shows.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They should include a picture of a dog like Fang, drawn or cut from a magazine, a key, some coins, a bank deposit slip, party hats, forks, knives and spoons.
3. Nate discovers that things can be “hidden” right in front of his eyes. Have students go out and really look at things, like a rock, a tree, the front of a house and discuss how really looking helps us see. They might try sketching a common object.
4. Have students start a collection of common objects they think are beautiful. They might decorate a box to keep their collection in. How do we decide what is beautiful?
5. Have them design an ornate key.
6. Have students plan a party for a dog, cat, or other pet.

C. Social Studies:
1. Have students interview someone who has a pet. What kind of pet do they have? What do they like about their pet? How do they keep their pet healthy and happy? What does having a pet do for them?
2. Have the class organize a scavenger hunt. One group might hide something and leave notes for others in the class to follow.
3. Have students learn about the history of keys. Why do we need keys? What would it be like if we didn’t have to lock things up? When were keys and locks first used? How have they changed in modern times?
4. Fang has a license on his collar. Have students find out why dogs need licenses. Why don’t cats need them?

D. Science and Math:
1. Have students learn more about magpies. Why do they steal shiny objects? What else do magpies do?
2. Have students create a flow chart tracing the clues Nate follows to solve the mystery. Be sure they also show the times when Nate follows a clue that doesn’t lead to the solution.
3. Have students learn about eels. Why are they shiny? How do they “create” electricity?
4. Have students learn how banks work. Why do people keep their money in banks?
5. Have students study coins. Why do we have coins of different denominations? What is pictured on our coins? Have students bring in coins from other countries for the class to look at.
6. Have students look at the picture of Fang and discuss what breed he is, then learn more about this and other dog breeds.

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Nate the Great and the Snowy Trail

by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Nate the Great has his work cut out for him when Rosamond loses his birthday present but can't tell him what it is because it's a surprise. Nate and his faithful dog, Sludge, face snow, ice, and fierce-looking Fang, Annie's dog, as they try to solve the case.

THEMES
mystery, humor, friends, seasons, pets, problem-solving

I. PRE-TEACHING
A. Have the class define and discuss these terms: detective, building, hex, clue, lighter, heavy, sofa, footprints, path, crunched, icicles, sniffed, package, puzzled, ice-cold, shivered, trudged, medium, pointy, bulgy, plaid, polka-dotted, chocolate, beautiful, scorpions, spiders, ugly, castle, question, refrigerator, warm, chilly, solved, biggest, monster, leaped, super-duper, scratches, forever

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:
1. How do detectives solve crimes? How do they find clues? Do you think you'd like to be a detective?
2. Have you ever lost anything? How did you go about finding it? What are some good ways to keep from losing things?
3. What would you do if someone brought you a birthday present you didn't want?
4. Do you have a pet? What do you like about your pet? Would you like to have another pet? What might happen if you brought home a new pet?

II. PRESENTATION
A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with pages 1 - 13: What are Nate and Sludge doing that cold, snowy day? Why has Rosamond come? What does she tell the snow detective? What does Nate ask her? Why is it strange that she bought a birthday present for Nate? How did she lose it? How did she know when it fell off? Why does Nate take the case? Why can't she tell him what the present is? What does she say it "could" be? What does he say in his note to his mother? What does he figure out about the weight of the present? What does he figure out about its size?
2. Advance to pages 14 - 23: How does Nate know where Rosamond lost the present? What is strange about it not being there? What make Sludge leap over the snow bank? What is Annie doing? What does Nate tell her? What is one thing he's sure about the present? What had Rosamond told Annie about the present? What does this tell Nate about it?

B. For Discussion:
1. What is funny about Rosamond hiring Nate to find the present, but needing to keep it a surprise? What other humor can you find in the story?
2. How does Rosamond convince Nate to take the case?
3. What clues does Nate follow? What does he ask the people he sees along the way?
4. How does he figure out what the present is? Will Nate decide to keep it? What clue in the illustration suggests the answer?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON
Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:
A. Language Arts:
1. Have students discuss how they would go about finding a lost item, like Nate's birthday present. One group might hide something and have another group try to find it. One student might take notes on how they go about it.
2. Nate describes the "Snowy Trail" case as an "ice-cold case." What do detectives mean when they refer to a "cold case"? This kind of humor is called a pun. Have students find or make up puns of their own.
3. Have students read or listen to the dedication in the front of the book. Why do authors dedicate their books to someone? Have students write a dedication they would use for a book they wrote and then talk about why.
4. Have students read the cat jokes in the back of the book and then make up some of their own. They might move on to dog jokes. What kind of humor are most of these jokes? What makes them funny?

B. Art and Music:
1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. The theme from the Pink Panther might be appropriate when Nate is following clues, or they might use the music from the Broadway play, Cats.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could cover the board with white, draw the snowdog and the snow detective, show Sludge, Rosamond, Nate, Rosamond’s cats in a sled, the “birthday present” in the tree and other things mentioned in the story.
3. Have students build a snow dog or cat.
4. Have students design a birthday card. They can make it beautiful or humorous.

C. Social Studies:
1. As he thinks about what his birthday present might be, Nate remembers that Rosamond thinks scorpions, spiders, and bats are beautiful, but he thinks they are ugly. Have students work alone to make a list of ten things they think are beautiful and ten things they think are ugly. Then have them compare lists. Does anything appear on both an “ugly” list and a “beautiful” list? Hold a discussion: What is ugly? What is beautiful? What does the expression, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” mean?
2. Have students visit a shelter and learn about cats and dogs that are there. What can be done to cut down on the problem of overpopulation of animals?
3. Have students find out what famous people have the same birthday as they do. Have them learn more about one person who shares their birthday.

D. Science and Math:
1. Have students make a flow chart of how Nate solves the mystery. What does he do first? How does each clue lead to the next one? What is he doing when the solution comes to him?
2. Have students learn why it snows and gets cold in the winter. What causes the seasons? Why are the seasons different below the equator?
3. Have students go outside on a snowy day and find prints, whether human or animal and see what they can figure out about what they see. They could come to school and report on what they find. What kind of animal made the print? What was it doing? What was the person who made footprints doing? How could they tell?
4. Have students learn about scorpions. What kind of animal are they? How do they defend themselves? What do they eat? Another group can learn about spiders and another about bats.
5. Have students find out what causes icicles. They might try making icicles on a cold day. Why are icicles the shape they are?
6. Have students watch a cat leaping. How is a cat able to leap so smoothly and so high?

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Nate the Great and the Crunchy Christmas

by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Annie’s dog Fang has lost something important and this makes him very unhappy. Nate the Great knows that an unhappy Fang is not a good thing, so he and his faithful dog Sludge set out to solve the mystery, which turns out to be a cold and snowy business.

I. PRE-TEACHING

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
- detective
- important
- shoveling
- chasing
- jingling
- received
- glared
- mailman
- flees
- disappears
- crunchy
- collection
- catalogs
- address
- flipped
- postcard
- reminder
- vet
- envelopes
- billion
- ninety-nine
- snuggles
- miracle
- decorate
- bottom
- hex
- Chanukah
- stronger
- messages
- favorite
- backyard
- soggy
- covered
- uncovered
- naughty
- gigantic
- hardworking
- shining
- window

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:
1. Do you have a pet dog or cat? What does your pet do that’s fun?
2. Have you noticed that dogs like to bury things? Why do you think they do this?
3. Do you like getting Christmas cards? What’s fun about sending and receiving Christmas or Hanukkah cards?
4. How do detectives find clues? How do the clues help them solve mysteries?
5. Do you think you’d like to be a detective? What sort of mysteries would you like to solve?

II. PRESENTATION

A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with pages 1 - 13: Why have Annie and Fang come to see Nate? Why isn’t Fang happy? What does Nate write to his mother? Why does the mailman sometimes drop Annie’s mail by the mailbox? What happens when Nate tries to take the mail out of Annie’s box? Why does Annie like catalogs? Why does Nate think they may hold a clue? Why does Nate need to see the catalogs that came last week? What happens when he picks one up?
2. Advance to pages 14 - 27: What is in the envelope Nate finds? Why does Annie say she never missed it? Why does Nate think Fang wouldn’t want to know about the postcard? What does Nate ask to see next? What questions has Mrs. Fang asked? How does Annie know Fang is happy to get his cards? What does Nate notice about the cards? What does he ask Annie? What does she tell him? What is on Rosamond’s door? Describe Rosamond’s cat tree. What has Rosamond found in her cat catalog? What might happen to Annie?
3. Complete the story with pages 28 - 41: What does Nate know so far about the case? What does he realize he has to do? What does he realize about the Christmas card? What do they find when they dig in the backyard? What must have happened to Mrs. Fang’s card? What does Annie call Fang? What does Nate vow about taking cases for a gigantic elf? What does Fang do to Nate? What does Annie say he’s doing? What is there just time for?

B. For Discussion:
1. Trace the steps Nate takes to work out the solution to the case. What makes him a good detective?
2. What does Nate mean when he says “solving is one thing, finding is another”?
3. What is the difference between a fact and a clue?
4. How does thinking like a dog help Nate solve the case?

III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

A. Language Arts:
1. Have students work in groups to write a detective story.
2. Have students listen to the near rhymes, like bells and elves, jingles and jangles. Why are these words near rhyme? What words would rhyme with them?
3. Fang glares at Nate. Have students find out what that word means and try doing it. Then, using a thesaurus, have them make a list of other words for “look” and try doing each of them.
4. Rosamond has a big card on her door saying “Santa Claws.” Why is it spelled this way instead of “Claus”? What kind of word play is this? Follow up by having students make up some other puns about cats, dogs.
5. Have students make a flow chart of how Nate solves the mystery. What does he do first? How does each clue lead to the next one? How often does he go over
what he has learned? How does this help him find the missing card?

B. Art and Music:
1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. The theme from the Pink Panther might be appropriate when Nate is following clues, “Jingle Bells” could be used when Fang and Annie first come to find Nate, as well as other Christmas songs for different scenes in the story.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could cover the board with white, make a border of red and green, cut out pictures from catalogs, especially dog and cat catalogs, add Nate’s note to his mother, a dog collar with bells, dog bones, Christmas cards, and other items mentioned in the story.
3. Have students design a card a dog or cat mother might send her puppy or kitten.
4. Have students design a Christmas collar for a dog or cat. Have them dress their pet for Christmas and bring in pictures.
5. Have students bring catalogs to class and talk about why so many come at Christmas. They might make a collage of things from catalogs they’d like to have.

B. Social Studies:
1. Have students find out how the mail gets from one place to another.
2. Nate notices there are catalogs just for dog items and then he finds that Rosamond has one just for cat items. Have students talk about why we buy presents for our pets.
3. Nate says that Fang must be on a mailing list. Have students find out how names get on mailing lists for catalogs and other advertisements.
4. Have students learn about Chanukah.

B. Science and Math:
1. Fang’s mother tells him not to go out when it’s ten below. Have students learn to read a thermometer. Where would “ten below” be in Fahrenheit? Why would this be too cold to go out? Where in the world might it get this cold? How is temperature measured in other countries? Why do we do it differently?
2. Annie says last year she counted a billion, nine-hundred, and ninety-nine things you could buy from her catalogs. Have students discuss how much a billion is. How much more than a million is it? Than a thousand? Than a hundred?
3. Because they aren’t addressed to her, Annie doesn’t worry about the heating or phone bill. Have students talk about why we pay for these things. What would happen if we didn’t pay the bills?
4. One of the items of mail is a postcard about Fang’s shots. Have students learn why our pets need to go to the vet for shots. What kind of shots do they need? You might invite a vet to talk to the class about what he does for their pets.
5. Have students figure out how much snow might fall on Nate’s walk in three and a half hours. What would it depend on?

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