When Arthur is called to the principal’s office and receives a large brown envelope marked “Personal and Confidential” to take home to his mother, he worries himself into a frenzy about what could be in it.

**THEMES**
- worry, family, problem-solving, friendship, responsibility, guilt

**I. PRE-TEACHING**

A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:
- cafeteria, scorekeeper, substitution, secretary, blindfolded, survived, obvious, torture, private and confidential, limousine, dreaded, rectangle, X-ray vision, accidentally, shredder, bulldozed, landfill, last resort, disturb, disappointment, fetched, accountant, frazzled, cringed, fidgeted, increasing, teetered, concentrate, squirmed, domination, historical, episode, stress, chimney, frustrated, documents, reactions, imagination

B. Before beginning the story, discuss with the class the following questions:
1. Have you ever been called to the principal's office? How did you feel?
2. Have you ever worried about something? What are some of the things you’ve worried about? How did it turn out? Should you have worried about it? Why or why not? What can you do to keep from worrying too much?
3. Do you ever daydream? What are some of the things you daydream about?

**II. PRESENTATION**

A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with Chapters 1-4: What announcement comes over the loudspeaker? What do Arthur's friends suggest might be the reason he has to go to the office? What do his friends think might be in the envelope? What does Arthur fear it means? What suggestions do his friends have for getting rid of the envelope? What ideas does Arthur come up with when talking to Pal? What does D. W. say when Arthur tells her about the envelope?
2. Advance to Chapters 5-7: What does Arthur’s mother do for a living? What does his father do? What happens to the envelope that night? Why does Arthur ask his parents about tests and assignments when they went to school? What is D. W. watching on TV?
3. Complete the story with Chapters 8-10: Where does Arthur keep seeing rectangles? What does he dream is happening down in the kitchen? What does he decide he must do? What does the envelope turn out to be? Why doesn’t he tell D. W. what was in the envelope?

B. For Discussion:
1. Why does Arthur worry so much about what’s in the envelope. How do his friends contribute to his worries? How might he have kept from worrying so much?
2. From their comments and descriptions, what can you tell about each of Arthur’s friends? What kinds of things does the Brain talk about? Why is he called the Brain? What can you tell about Muffy from what she talks about?
3. What do Arthur’s dreams tell him? How might he use his active imagination to solve his worry problem?
4. When D. W. tells Arthur about her worries he says those are “regular worries.” What are some of the regular worries people have? What are some special worries?

**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 about the school cafeteria. They might make up humorous poems or stories about the cafeteria. Encourage imagination and exaggeration. Have them share with the class.
2. Brainstorm with students about the things that worry them. Have them write about one of their worries and what they might do about it. Then have them write a pamphlet with suggestions on how to handle worries.
3. Have students listen to the similes used, such as when Sue Ellen says Arthur looks like a deer startled by headlights. Have students come up with similes of their own, beginning with starter sentences, such as, “He looks like…”; “It feels like…”; or “She sounds like…”.
4. Have students come up with “Good news...bad news” jokes to share with the class.
5. Share with students chapters from humorous books, such as those by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat or Patricia Reilly Giff.
B. Art and Music:
1. Have students select background music that might be appropriate to some of the scenes. They might look for mysterious music for when Arthur gets the envelope and as his worry increases, such as the theme from *The Pink Panther*.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could show Arthur and his friends in the cafeteria and all the things Arthur imagines might be in the envelope, include a tax form, a milk carton made into a hockey puck and other items mentioned in the story. They should feature the envelope in the center of the display.
3. Have students learn to sing the folksong, “Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme.”

C. Social Studie:
1. Have students find articles and advice about worry and share with the class. Open a discussion about the harmful effects of worrying. Follow up by having students make a poster of ways to avoid worrying.
2. Have students make up rules for a “milk carton” hockey game. How might the rules be different from an ice or field hockey game?
3. Buster says, “Those who don’t learn their history are doomed to repeat it.” Have students find out who said this and give the exact quotation. Then have them learn about some historical events that happened because people didn’t know their history, such as when Hitler invaded Russia about a century after Napoleon’s army was defeated by the harsh Russian winters.
4. Have students watch how their mother or father sorts the mail. What mail is saved? What mail goes into the wastebasket? Why does so much of it get thrown away?
5. When the envelope goes into the wastebasket, Arthur is convinced it was fate that guided it there. Have students find out about different beliefs about how our lives are control by fate and hold a discussion.

D. Science and Math:
1. In trying to decipher what’s in the envelope, the Brain says, “I wish I could use my X-ray vision.” Have students learn how X-ray work. What shows up in an X-ray? What doesn’t show up? They might discuss what it would be like to have X-ray vision.
2. The Brain suggests Arthur might drop the envelope down the storm drain and it could end up in Europe. Have students trace how something that goes down a storm drain could end up in the ocean and maybe in Europe or Japan.
3. Arthur’s mother is a tax accountant. Have students find out how people figure out their taxes. Why do we need taxes?
4. Arthur’s father tells him that studying math may come in handy in the work he chooses. Have students write down a list of jobs and then next to them, list how this job might require math.
5. Arthur’s math problem involves cutting a rectangle in half. Have students do this and discuss what they now have.

**USING AUDIOBOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM**

When it comes to teaching today’s students, sometimes books are just not enough. In an increasingly technological and information-savvy world, the ability to read will be critical to every child’s success. The value of audiobooks as a learning tool in the education of children is widely recognized by experts. Audiobooks bring written text to life, adding an interactive quality that can ignite a child’s imagination. They encourage reading by broadening vocabularies, stretching attention spans, and fostering critical-thinking skills. Listening to audiobooks in the classroom can effectively enrich the reading experience and aid your students in understanding and appreciating literature, history, theatre arts, and more!

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Arthur and the Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club
by Marc Brown

When Arthur and his friends discover a group calling themselves “Parents Against Weird Stories,” or PAWS, have removed all the books in the Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club series from the library shelves, they decide to take a stand against censorship.

THEMES
censorship, courage, problem-solving, friendship, responsibility, leadership, betrayal

I. PRE-TEACHING
A. These terms should be defined and discussed:
patient, revving, waffles, collided, exaggerating, combination, eyed, platter, shivering, Underworld, snaked, trudged, unbelievable, conclusions, sinister, disbelief, satellite, generally, avengers, concentration, quantitatively, signatures, petition, megaphone, inflatable, propeller, sponsor, chanting, predilect, geometric, hypothesis, situation, ban, technical, balance sheet, pluses and minuses, sacrifice, portable, applause, condemning, straightened, pen name, obviously, detective, squabbles, disband

B. Consider the following questions:
1. Do you like scary books? What are some of your favorites? Why do you like them?
2. Have you ever been told you shouldn’t read a particular book? How did you feel about that? What did you do? Should people be able to read whatever they want? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever signed a petition? Why do people create petitions? What do they accomplish?

II. PRESENTATION
A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with Chapters 1-4: What does Arthur like about Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club books? Why has the parents group taken the books off the shelves? What does Buster suggest they do? What does Francine suggest? How do they each go about getting signatures on their petition?
2. Advance to Chapters 5-7: How does the woman Arthur talks to react when he tells her about the Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club books being banned? What does Arthur realize about Muffy’s invitation to Wonderworld? What does his father tell him when he asks for advice?
3. Complete the story with Chapters 8-10: What does Arthur’s sign say? Why is he elected to deliver the petitions to Mr. Crosswire? What does the woman in the crowd ask Mr. Crosswire? Who does she turn out to be? How had Mr. Crosswire known her? What caused Muffy’s parents to decide to condemn the Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club books? How does Miss McWord convince Mr. Crosswire not to ban the books after all?

B. For Discussion:
1. When he’s trying to decide between going to Wonderworld or protesting at the meeting, Arthur asks his father, “Why does sticking up for what you believe in have to be so difficult?” Try answering Arthur’s question.
2. How does Muffy feel when the others find out her parents started PAWS? What does she say they have to decide? What secret has she been keeping from her parents?
3. It turns out Mr. Crosswire hasn’t read the book he’s condemning. Should a person condemn a book without reading it first? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the librarian should have prevented PAWS from removing the books from the shelves? Why or why not? What could she have done?
5. If the author of the books hadn’t been there, do you think Mr. Crosswire would have changed his mind? Why or why not?

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

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:
A. Language Arts:
1. Arthur tells his father he wishes there were a book where he could look up the answers to hard questions. Have students work in groups to create an answer book to life’s hard questions. They might find a copy of Jackson Brown, Jr.’s Life’s Little Instruction Book or Robert Fulghum’s All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten to help them come up with ideas.
2. Have students write about standing up for an idea or a principle. They could do it as an essay, a story or a poem.
3. The story ends with the opening lines of the latest Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club story. Have students continue the story. Compare the different versions students comes up with.
4. Have students talk about scary books they like, such as from the Goosebump series. Why do they enjoy scary books? How do their parents feel about these books? Do they think these books should be kept away from little children? Why or why not?
5. The pen name of the author of the Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club books is E.A. D’Poe referring to American short story writer and poet, Edgar Allan Poe. Share some of his works with the class. They might listen to selections from the audiobook, *The Best of Edgar Allan Poe*.

5. Have students interview their school or town librarian on the subject of censorship. They could prepare questions about how books are chosen for the library and how the librarian feels about banned books. The interview might be published in the school or town newspaper.

**B. Art and Music:**

1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. They might find circus music for when Arthur’s father is dressed like a clown, or songs from *The Music Man*.

2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They might design mock-ups of the Scare-Your-Pants-Off Club books, find articles about censorship, show a copy of the signed petition, and include the signs Arthur and his friends bring to the rally.

3. The American Library Association celebrates the freedom to read each year with posters, buttons, and a published list of books that have been banned (including the Bible, *Huckleberry Finn*, even *Harry Potter!*). Have students contact ALA at 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, or work with their school librarian to receive these materials for display around school.

**C. Social Studies:**

1. Have students learn about censorship throughout history, such as during the Revolutionary War, in Germany during World War II, or in Russia under Communism. Hold a discussion about censorship. Why are books censored?

2. Have students learn about people who have taken a stand on important issues, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Susan B. Anthony, Mahatma Gandhi, Joan of Arc, Harriet Tubman, Jane Addams, or Jackie Robinson. Why did these people think it was important to stand up for their beliefs? What happened to them? What changes were brought about because of their beliefs? How were their ideas carried forth?

3. The Brain tells the people waiting for the bus, “Recreational reading yields many educational benefits.” Have students hold a debate about this, drawing examples from their own reading.

**D. Science and Math:**

1. When Arthur and his friends are amazed that they are on TV so quickly after being filmed, the Brain explains it’s because the station uses a “satellite downfeed” to send the pictures back to the studio. Have students find out how TV stations use satellites to get pictures from all over the world.

2. Arthur and Francine help Buster with his math by wearing T-shirts with the problem he is working on printed on them. Have students see if they can work out Buster’s math question “7 x 3” without anyone wearing numbered T-shirts. They might suggest other clever ways to help someone visualize a math problem.

3. The Brain tries to educate the public with flowcharts showing how the absence of the books will affect the learning curve. Have students find out what a learning curve is and, with help, plot one for something they are learning.

4. Arthur’s father always says it’s healthy to have a little bit of everything from the food groups. Have students find out what foods are on the food groups chart and why they are displayed as a pyramid.

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Arthur Makes the Team
by Marc Brown

Arthur is thrilled to make the Little League team, but he’s afraid he won’t play as well as his friends, especially Francine, who teases him for being a klutz and dropping the ball. But when Francine’s father makes her assistant coach, she has to swallow her pride and teach him how to catch.

THEMES
sportsmanship, teamwork, problem-solving, friendship, responsibility, leadership, self-confidence

I. PRE-TEACHING
A. These terms should be defined and discussed:
nervous, downspout, teammates, stance, rosters, motto, sputtered, ingenious, creative, caterer, goop, sparkplug, recommend, approached, microphone, guaranteed, complaining, concentrate, fundamentals, surveyed, kernel, concentration, encouraging, positive, contribution, absolutely, promote, fringe benefits, kinks, concerned, benefit, definitely, promotion, suspiciously, insults, embarrassed, inning, bleachers, umpire, backpedaled, cleats

B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:
1. Have you ever been afraid to do something because you hadn’t done it before? What did you finally do? What do you wish you had done differently?
2. Do you play a sport? What sport is it? Is there a sport you’d like to play? What would it be like to be on a team?
3. Have you ever worked hard at getting better at something? What did it feel like when you are trying to learn? How did you feel when you succeeded?
4. Why is hard at first to learn new skills?

II. PRESENTATION
A. Understanding the Story:
1. Begin with Chapters 1 - 3: Why is Arthur nervous about joining the team? Name Arthur’s friends who are also on the team. Why does Francine think the coach will choose her to pitch? Why doesn’t he? What does the coach say will be their motto? What story does Arthur’s father tell him to help him with his problem?
2. Advance to Chapters 4 - 7: What is Buster’s mother worried about? Describe some of the ways Francine teases Arthur. What does Buster give Arthur for a good luck charm? How does D. W. eat her corn-on-the-cob? What does her father say about it? Where does Coach take them as a reward for working hard? Why doesn’t Arthur join them? What does Muffy suggest Francine do about Arthur? What does her father decide to do instead?
3. Complete the story with Chapters 8 - 10: Why has Francine come to Arthur’s house? What advice does she give him about catching the ball? What does he tell her she should do? What does she say he should do if she teases him? How does the team play in the eighth inning? Who causes the team to lose the game? How does Francine react? Why does Arthur think it will be hard for Francine to learn not to tease and complain about the other players?

B. For Discussion:
1. Find examples where Francine uses sarcasm to tease Arthur. Why is sarcasm hurtful when aimed at other people? Is it ever okay to use sarcasm? Why or why not?
2. In what ways is Mr. Frensky a good coach? Find examples in the story to support your answer, such as how he compliments the players, even when they make mistakes, and his handling of Francine.
3. How does the story Arthur’s father tells him relate to Arthur’s worries about playing baseball? What lesson did Arthur’s father learn from his experience? How does Arthur apply this to his own situation?
4. Why does Francine’s father decide to promote her to assistant manager?
5. What advice does Francine give Arthur about his catching? How does he use this advice to help her with her throwing and to help Buster with his batting? How might this advice be applied to learning other things?

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 to the verbs used to capture the sports action, like rapped, singled, backpedaled, lined, and popped. Add other verbs that would be good in a sports story, and write a description of an exciting moment in a game.
2. Arthur felt he wasn't good at baseball, so he worried about it. Have students think about something they are not good at and brainstorm ideas on how they might improve.

3. Have students think of a teacher, coach, or other leader who is good with kids the way Coach Frensky is and write a to tribute this person. They might include a short note and send the tribute to the person.

4. Have students listen to a sports announcer on TV or the radio and write down how the action is described. They could put on a radio show of their own and comment on a sports event at school.

5. Have students find poems about sports to read to the class. They might try writing a poem about their favorite sport.

6. Have students think of a project they need to do or a skill they want to learn and make a list of each step involved. As they do each item on their list, have them cross it off. Then have them discuss how breaking something into steps helps them get it done.

B. Art and Music:
1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. They might find music that depicts sports action, such as the song “Take Me Out To The Ballgame.”

2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They could show the team playing the Penguins, include a bat and ball and make the bulletin board look like a baseball diamond. They could add pictures of famous players and teams.

3. Arthur’s father is in the catering business. Have students demonstrate how to cook a favorite dish for the class.

C. Social Studies:
1. Have students learn about some famous baseball players or teams.

2. Have students learn about the invention of the game of baseball. Where was it invented? What is an earlier version? What similar games are played in other countries? How are the rules different?

3. Have students discuss the rules of baseball. Why is it important to know and follow the rules in a game?

4. In many places boys and girls don’t play together the way they do on Arthur’s team. Have students talk about why boys and girls have separate teams in high school and college. Should girls be allowed to play on a boys’ team? Why or why not?

5. Buster tells Arthur he needs a good luck charm. Have students discuss good luck charms and other superstitions. Why do people believe in these things? Do they work? Why or why not?

D. Science and Math:
1. Have students describe how they would calculate the speed of a ball and estimate where it’s going so they can hit it.

2. Have students find out how baseballs and bats are made. What materials are they made of? Where are they produced? What are some controversies about using modern materials for bats?

3. Have students learn how baseball is scored. Another group might gather statistics for their favorite teams and players and discuss what they mean.

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