

EDUCATOR GUIDE

TEDDY VS. THE FUZZY DOOM

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Educator Guide by Danny Neville

GENRE: children's fiction

THEMES: horror & ghost stories, humorous stories, friendship, anxiety, self-awareness

Grades 3–7, Ages 8–12

SUITABLE FOR: Fountas and Pinnell L

GUIDED READING LEVEL: 470L

LEXILE: RL.2.2.1,2,3,4,5,6,7

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: W.2.1,3,5,6
SL.2.1,1a,1b,1c,2,3,4,5,6
L.2.2,3,4,4a,4b,4c,4d,4e,5,5a,5b,6

SUMMARY:

The secrets of Ravensbarrow have been buried far too long. Now they're waking up . . .

Starting at a new school is hard enough for an anxious kid like Teddy. But Ravensbarrow Elementary seems extra unsettling. First, there are the zombielike kids and teachers, with their vacant stares and strange, echoey voices. Then there are the hamsters. So. Many. Hamsters. With their scrabby claws and beady eyes and . . . wait. Can those hamsters talk?

Teddy must face old fears (making friends) and new ones (evil hamsters!) in this frightening and fast-paced, hilarious, and heartfelt novel.



Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

BEFORE READING THE BOOK

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

Learn About Anxiety

Watch one of these videos from [Anxiety Canada](#) with your students:

- [Fight, Flight or Freeze—Anxiety Explained for Teens](#) (older students)
- [Galaxy Brain, Episode 1—Social Anxiety](#) (younger students)

Ask students the following questions about anxiety:

- What is anxiety?
- How might it feel to be anxious about something?

Practice this calm [breathing activity](#) with your students.



Writing Prompt

What if pets could talk? Ask students to choose a pet they know (their own, a friend's pet, or one from movies or television) or one they have made up. Ask them to brainstorm a bunch of interview questions, choose the best five questions, and answer them as if they are the pet.

Pet Survey

Ask students about the kinds of pets their classmates and students in their grade or school have. Then, have them create a survey and method of collecting data that will help to gather information from other students in their class or school.

First, students should make a prediction about the results they think they will find. Then ask them to conduct their surveys and gather the responses. They can use tally marks to record data, then create a graph using connecting blocks, chart paper, or a digital tool (i.e., MS Excel or Google Sheets). Ask students to compare the results with their predictions then share their findings.

*Adapt the survey! Older students might like to dive a bit deeper into this survey to collect more specific data: for example, they could narrow their research by focusing on specific breeds of dogs. They could also collect data from multiple questions (i.e., type of pet, number of pets, age of pet, etc.)

WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

FABULOUS Words

FABULOUS words are interesting, unfamiliar, and/or fun-to-say. Ask students to make a list of FABULOUS words they find in the book as they read. Everyone will have their own unique list, but here are some potential examples:

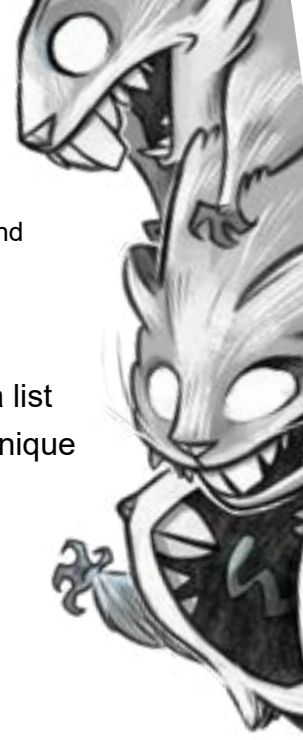
- Tangent (p. 4)
- Douse (p. 110)
- Deter (p. 128)
- Debris (p. 130)
- Lurched (p. 143)
- Miscreant (p. 156)
- Rummage (p. 185)
- Tenacious (p. 192)
- Sedate (p. 196)
- Horde (p. 200)
- Ravenous (p. 216)

Once they have collected a bunch of words, ask students to choose one (or more) of the following activities:

- Find or create some graph paper and make a word search using your FABULOUS words. Exchange word searches with classmates, or teachers can photocopy and use for indoor recesses, extra practice, homework, or word study activities.
- Revise the pet interview you did in the "Before Reading This Book" section to include as many FABULOUS words as you can. Add new questions and answers if you like.
- Create a FABULOUS word deck using index cards. Make 4 quadrants on your card and include the word, part of speech, definition, and sentence. For example:

Tangent (p. 4)	noun
An abrupt change of course.	In the middle of our conversation about pet hamsters, she went off on a tangent about her trip to the beach.

Definition from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tangent>





d) Make mini posters with bubble letters and lots of color for each of your FABULOUS words. Start a FABULOUS word wall in your classroom where everyone can add their own FABULOUS words.

Discussion Questions

1. Teddy lives with anxiety. Make a list of the things he's anxious about. On p. 38, he says, "What's scary for me is BEING friends with people." How does he describe this?

Anxiety can be a serious mental health issue that many people face on a regular basis, but the author chooses to tell this story with humor. Ask students if they think humor can be an effective tool for talking about more serious issues and have them explain why.

Ask students what they think the difference is between a phobia and a fear. After reading more about phobias, ask students if they think Teddy's fear of milk counts as a phobia and use examples from the text to explain why. For more information on phobias, check out these resources from [Anxiety Canada](#) or the [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#).

2. The book begins with Teddy's first day at his new school, Ravensbarrow Elementary (or Ravensbee, for short). He's quite nervous about the first day, but being the new kid can be a challenging time for anyone. Have your students design a school plan for addressing the concerns, worries, and fears that new students at your school may have. What activities or procedures would help make a smoother transition? Have them brainstorm ideas that might help before, during, and after the student's first day of school.
3. When Teddy's classmates and teacher were all turned into hamster-controlled zombies, he was trying to think of an excuse to get out of the classroom. Have students put themselves in Teddy's shoes and come up with the best/weirdest/most hilarious excuse for why Teddy needs to leave that classroom. What would the teacher say? His classmates? How about Scrabbles?
4. The author uses humor to tell Teddy's story. As students read the story, ask them to find their top three hilarious moments in the book. What makes these scenes so funny? Have students compare their top three list with another reader, or with the whole class. Is there a scene that appears on multiple lists? Why?

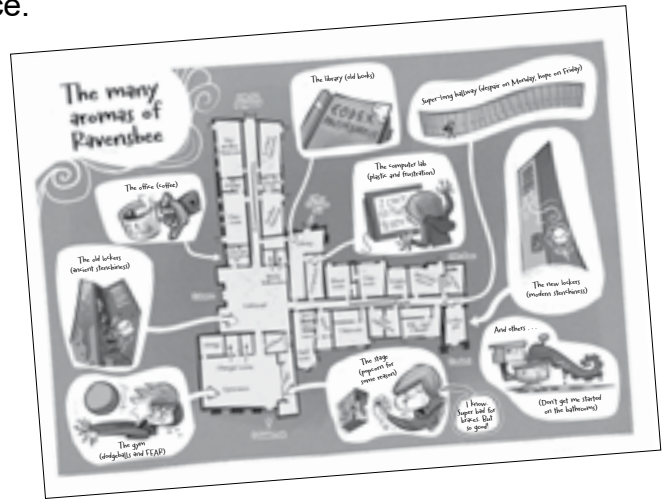
Authors also need to be careful that humor doesn't become offensive or hurtful in books. Think of the difference between laughing at someone vs. laughing with someone. Ask students if they think the author has accomplished this balance. Why or why not?

5. Imagine this book was written without illustrations. How would it be different? What purpose do the illustrations serve?

6. Ask students to think about one food that they absolutely can't stand. What is it? Why do they dislike it so much? Have them write a paragraph describing the food in detail. What does it smell/taste/look like? How would it make them feel to see it on a plate in front of them? Students can share their paragraph with a partner or the whole class.
7. Throughout the book, Teddy "talks" to his inner voice. Ask students where they think this inner voice comes from. On page 191, he begins to stand up to it. Have students share what they think gives him the courage to stand up to his inner voice.

Draw a map of your school

Ask students to draw a map of their elementary school and compare their drawing to Teddy's on page 20–21. Is Teddy correct about all elementary schools being the same? Teddy uses some funny illustration bubbles to add detail to his map. Ask students if there's any funny details they can add to their maps.



AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

Hamster Care

Now that the hamsters have returned to normal, Heather (“Hamster-Girl”) would like to create a product to help future hamster owners to take care of their pets. Ask students to check out [Pet MD](#) or another resource to do some research about hamster care. Students can create a brochure to help future hamster owners with hamster housing, bedding, diet, toys, cleaning, handling, and possible medical issues (other than turning into demonic, blood-thirsty, evil overlords).

Anti-Bullying Presentation

A theme in this book is Teddy's fear of being bullied. In the beginning, he's willing to do almost anything to blend in so people won't pick on him, call him names, or bully him. Ask students to do some research about bullying using the resources below or any others that they discover. Students can create a five-slide presentation or one-minute video explaining bullying and one thing kids can do to help stop bullying in their school, classroom, sports team, etc.

- [Pink Shirt Day](#)
- [What to do if you're experiencing bullying](#) (Kids Help Phone)
- [Bullying—know what it is](#) (Government of Alberta)
- [We can all help stop it](#) (Government of Ontario)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

Design a hamster trap

Students will need to create two versions of their hamster trap designs; one for the average pet hamster that might have escaped inside someone's house and one for capturing evil, zombie-making hamsters like Scrabbles. How might the traps be different? How might they be the same?

Hamster puppet show

In chapter 13, Duggy suggests making hamster puppets to help camouflage the kids as they walk through the school. Ask students what materials they might need to create a hamster puppet. Have them try using as many recycled or reused objects as they can to create their puppets. Put students (aka ape-pups) into groups and have them use their hamster to create a short puppet show. Ask them to create the dialogue, scene, background, and characters. Students can perform their puppet shows for their class.

