

Teacher's Notes



Gustav and Henri

Written by Andy Matthews

Illustrated by Peadar Thomas

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary aged readers (ages 5+, grades 2+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - Expressing and developing ideas (ACELA1469)
 - Creating literature (ACELT1833)
 - Creating texts (ACELY1673)

THEMES

- Friendship
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving
- Creativity
- Celebrating differences
- Looking for clues
- Humour

SYNOPSIS

Gustav and Henri are best friends, but that doesn't mean they're the same! While Gustav likes to head straight towards trouble, Henri Normal prefers to go slow. And even though Gustav jumps into adventures without even thinking, Henri Normal is very good at coming up with a plan (or an invention) to save the day.

Whether Gustav and Henri are playing badminton on the moon, travelling back in time to avoid overdue book fines, or escaping from a crew of sewer pie-rats, they always manage to find their way out of trouble. When you've got your best friend with you, you can turn any catastrophe into an adventure.

This madcap series will encourage readers to use teamwork and imagination to solve problems and have fun. Each book in the series contains three zany illustrated adventures that will appeal to both sophisticated and struggling readers and get them solving problems like a pro (or a pig!)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Matthews is a Melbourne-based writer, comedian and actor. He has written and appeared on many of Australia's favourite comedy shows, such as Shaun Micallef's *Mad as Hell*, *The Project*, *Talkin' 'Bout Your Generation*, *The Checkout* and *The Chaser's Media Circus*. He has been a runner up in the national finals of Raw Comedy and nominated for the Golden Gibbo award at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. He is passionate about space and pancakes.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Peader Thomas is an illustrator and comic book artist from Melbourne. While maintaining his own artistic practice, his illustrations can also be found in *Treadlie*, *Marketing* and on Punt Road wine labels. Peader has worked with the 100 Story Building and as an 'Artist in Schools' across Melbourne, teaching children to write and illustrate comic books. You can see more of Peader's work at peaderthomas.com, or more frequently @peaderthomas on Instagram. He has not (as yet) played badminton at the Olympics.

THEMES

On their adventures, Gustav and Henri need to solve the most extraordinary puzzles together. It's lucky Henri is so good at building things! But underneath the silliness, readers will find the familiar, comforting theme of friendship. Throughout their adventures, *Gustav and Henri* explore:

- How to navigate differences
- Celebrating each other's strengths
- Using your imagination to solve problems
- Working together and having fun

Gustav and Henri see things differently, and this is one of the greatest strengths of their friendship. Readers will be able to consider their own strengths and the different values and qualities they bring to friendships and to problems. Just like Henri and Gustav, readers will learn that most of the time two people working together to solve a problem is better than one.

WRITING STYLE

Andy Matthews' writing embraces silliness and wordplay, swapping familiar words out for their story counterparts. On the moon, a rhinoceros becomes a *lunoceros*, and of course, when someone is time-travelling, it's *clock-o-diles* you have to watch out for, not crocodiles. Readers will have enormous fun identifying these silly swaps and figuring out the meaning behind their changes.

The humour in these books takes the pressure off for readers who are still feeling uncertain of their comprehension skills. By creating space for misunderstanding and silliness, readers will feel more confident to make mistakes and have a go.

Gustav and Henri is a graphic novel, and so dialogue plays an important role in both the images and the story. Dialogue is a fantastic way for readers to start thinking about the different ways that characters speak, and to try out some silly voices as they read the book aloud (or even perform key scenes!) One activity might be to black out the dialogue from a selected page, and invite students to fill in their own



dialogue thinking about what the characters might be saying based on the images and the context of the surrounding story.

COMPREHENSION

- What is Gustav good at? What is Henri good at? Choose one of their skills and describe how it is used in one of the stories.
- Who is more likely to suggest an adventurous outing?
- Describe a perfect day for Henri and a perfect day for Gustav. How are they different? What does your own perfect day look like?
- Find at least one example where Henri's practical advice would have avoided a problem.
- In 'Gustav, Lost Pig', what is the secret of the desert island? What dessert would you add to the island? Draw a picture of your dessert setting, showing what lollies or desserts you would use to make it.
- How does the size and shape of the text tell you about the emotions of the characters? How else can you show emotions in a story (either in words or pictures)?
- In 'Gustav, Space Pig', what animal does Gustav think the spaceship should be based on? Do you think this is a good idea?
- What is the secret challenge Henri and Gustav have to overcome to beat King Steve?
- What does Gustav decide to leave behind when he realises that all of the pancakes he's eaten have made the plane too heavy? Did he make the right choice?
- In 'Gustav, Time Pig', why did Gustav forget to return Henri's library book?
- What problems do Henri and Gustav encounter when they travel back in time?
- What does Gustav get wrong when he rewrites the book?
- What is so special about Pig Day? How does Henri feel about Pig Day?
- Where do Gustav and Henri find Aunt Norma in 'Detective Gustav and the Great Aunt Hunt'?
- What special item of clothing does Gustav wear when he is being a detective? What other special clothes or tools do detectives use when they're on a case?

WRITING EXERCISE

When Gustav and Henri travel back in time, they have to make several stops before the book is returned (almost) as good as new. But time travel is a tricky business – that time machine could have landed Gustav and Henri anywhere (or when)! Imagine that Gustav and Henri's time machine has landed them somewhere even more unexpected. Where are they? Write a story about a problem that they have to overcome in order to get home again.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

As this is a graphic novel, Peadar Thomas's illustrations are as much a part of the story as the text. This format is not only useful as an accessible way for early readers to engage with longer stories, but also encourages them to use their decoding skills to 'read' the information provided by the images. Examples



of this can be found throughout the stories, but include the scene in 'Detective Gustav and the Great Pig Day Mystery', when the images reveal that the invited party guests are NOT responsible for stealing the cake (although, of course, in a twist it turns out that they are!) Readers might describe the parts of the story told through pictures and try to draw their own interpretations of some of the scenes.

Why do you think the illustrator only uses one or two colours in the pictures? How does Peadar Thomas use different shades of grey to add emphasis or detail to particular images?

Think about some of the information images you find in the book – there are maps, pages from journals, blueprints and more. How are these illustrations different from the comic panels on the other pages? What does the style tell you about the type of information being presented? Create your own information image to accompany one of the stories in the book.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Gustav is good at imagining elaborate inventions, and Henri Normal is the best at building them. It's the perfect pairing of their skills! In 'Space Pig', Henri builds Gustav's dream rocket to take them both to space. It's a pig, of course, with all of the necessary rooms! Design and draw your own spaceship. What animal would you design it after? What rooms would you need to fit inside?
2. Make a list of the differences between Henri and Gustav. Are their differences good or bad? Look at the 'Introducing ...' page at the beginning of the book. What details are included on this page? Draw a picture introducing yourself and your best friend. Make a list of each of your strengths and weaknesses to go with your picture.
3. Pig Day is the opposite of Christmas Day. What is your Christmas Day, or other big celebration day like? Describe what would happen in your Pig Day if everything was opposite.
4. As Gustav and Henri shows, a good adventure story has a problem to solve, a bad guy and a crazy invention. Write your own short comic strip where Gustav and Henri have to solve a brand-new problem, featuring your own bad guy creation and wild invention. Make sure you use pictures and dialogue to tell the story as well!
5. How do Gustav and Henri each react to a crisis? Use what you know about Gustav and Henri to write a story that imagines what would happen to Gustav and Henri in one of the following scenarios:
 - a. They go on a nice peaceful mountain hike.
 - b. They meet a crocodile with a sore tooth.
 - c. They discover a trapdoor in the garden that leads to a deep, dark tunnel.
 - d. They go away for a week-long ocean cruise.
6. In Gustav's diary in 'Gustav, Lost Pig' he sometimes makes himself sound braver than he really is. Do you think Henri does this too? Write a page from Henri's diary that shows how he solved the mystery of the desert island in this story.

RELATED READING

- *Real Pigeons Fight Crime* by Andrew McDonald and Ben Wood
- *Sherlock Bones and the Natural History Mystery* by Renee Trembl
- *The Bad Guys* by Aaron Blabey

