

Educator Discussion Guide

JAKE THE FAKE KEEPS IT REAL

by Craig Robinson & Adam Mansbach

Illustrations by Keith Knight

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2019-2020

Grade 3-5

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Meet Jake, a 6th grade student who recently gained acceptance into the prestigious Music and Art Academy (MAA) for gifted and talented students, except he doesn't belong there. Jake has faked his way into MAA by playing the only song he knows, accidentally-on-purpose looking at the math answers of another student, and actually writing well. Even so, he doesn't think that he would get in, but he has. But now it's only a matter of time until one of the teachers finds him out. Jake is surrounded by so many ingenious people. He doesn't think that he can be a visionary, but he is pretty sure that he can fool the school by "Outweirding the Weirdos". While this may be fine for everyday shenanigans like insisting that everyone call him "The Dentist," the big talent show is coming up. Jake needs to come up with a great plan or MAA will find out his deceit and remove him from the school. Can Jake pull off the biggest farce MAA has ever seen? Find out by reading *Jake the Fake Keeps It Real*.

This book is great for anyone that has ever considered themselves to be a misfit or an underdog, especially during the most awkward time of all— middle school. Through this story there are great examples of genuine friendship with long standing relationships and unexpected gems. This early chapter book is full of wit that parents and teachers will appreciate and illustrations in the margins that will engage the intended young audience.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Craig Robinson is a comedian, actor, and musician. This book is loosely based on the life of Robinson, both as a young person attending one of Chicago's first public magnet schools and as a music teacher witnessing hilarious moments with students. Craig is most noted for his acting work as Darrel Philbin on NBC's "The Office." Craig has an M Ed. from St. Xavier University and discovered his love for comedy while in Chicago when he joined the Second City Theater.

Biographical information taken from Craig Robinson Official Website, "Bio" Accessed October 18, 2018 Retrieved from <http://www.mrcraigrobinson.com/>

Adam Mansbach: Adam is infamous for a book whose title cannot be disclosed here. Adam has written over a dozen other books, including one that has won the California Book Award. He recently wrote the screenplay for the movie Barry, which is about President Barack Obama as a college student. He has also appeared in numerous national publications.

Biographical information taken from Penguin Random House, “About the Author: Adam Mansbach” Accessed October 18, 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/18930/adam-mansbach>

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Art by Keith Knight: Recipient of the Eisner Award and the NAACP History Maker Award, Keith Knight is one of funniest and most highly regarded cartoonists in America. He also has three highly regarded comic strips: *The Knight Life*, *(th)ink*, and *the K Chronicles*. His art has also been published in multiple national publications. When not drawing, Keith is a social advocate and educator.

Biographical information taken from, Keith Knight, Gentleman Cartoonist. “Keef” Accessed October 18, 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.kchronicles.com/bio.html>

BOOK AWARDS

Nominee, Early Chapter Book, Cybils Awards, 2017.

OTHER TITLES IN SERIES

Jake the Fake Goes for Laughs, (previously titled *Jake the Fake Stands Up*) available March 26, 2019

PREREADING ACTIVITIES:

True Colors Personality Test

In the story, our protagonist, Jake, is having a difficult time adjusting to his new environment and does not feel that he belongs at his new school. Most people have felt a lack of belonging or feeling different or inadequate at one point or another throughout their lives. Jake can very easily recognize that the students at his school are different from him and even vary in personality and talent from each other. Jake is struggling to figure out where he fits in at school. The True Colors Personality Test is a great way to help us figure out things about ourselves. The True Colors Personality Test, which originated in 1978 by Don Lowry, helps people become more self-aware and better understand their strengths and weaknesses. It is also where we derived the phrase someone’s “true colors.”

The student version of the test itself is easily Googled, but a free version of the test on Teachers Pay Teachers by Ms. Johnson is both age appropriate for students, as well clear in identifying the four major personality types. This test will empower students in understanding what their strengths are and how they can best contribute to their community. This activity will serve students well, as well as help them start to start thinking critically about how Jake should be approaching his new school.

True Colors International (2018) *What is true colors?* Retrieved from <https://truecolorsintl.com/about-us/what-is-true-colors/>

Johnson, Ms. *True Colors Personality Test Freebie*. Retrieved from <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/True-Colors-Personality-Test-freebie-1309341>

Developing a Growth Mindset

One of the main causes of Jake's anxiety throughout the story is that he is convinced that he is stuck in his current intellect and ability levels. He thinks he needs to create diversions of epically odd proportions to distract both his classmates and teachers from his perceived lack of talent. In addition to understanding his individual personality strengths from the true colors test, Jake would have also benefited from being explicitly taught the concept of growth mindset. Often, teachers are encouraged by administrators to have a growth mindset regarding how they look at students or attempt to teach something new. Explicitly teaching the concept of a growth mindset is pivotal to children as their brains are literally still growing! Also, modeling that we as adults have struggles will lessen the anxiety and vulnerability that students may feel towards trying new things.

Khan Academy has a great resource that can be assigned as independent work, group work, or modeled by the instructor that introduces students to the concept of basic brain function, and most importantly, shows that the brain is always capable of learning new information. There are three short parts: two-2-3-minute videos and reflection questions for the students. Ultimately, students should walk away from this activity with a refreshed quest for new knowledge and creative problem solving. This activity would have been very beneficial to Jake, and possibly helped him make some better (albeit possibly less hilarious) choices in the story.

Student Facing:

Activity 1, part 1: The truth about your brain (ES/MS) Khan Academy. Retrieved from <https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/learnstorm-growth-mindset-activities-us/elementary-and-middle-school-activities/activity-1-the-truth-about-your-brain/a/introduction-to-activity-1>

Activity 1, part 2: The truth about your brain (ES/MS) Khan Academy. Retrieved from <https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/learnstorm-growth-mindset-activities-us/elementary-and-middle-school-activities/activity-1-the-truth-about-your-brain/a/how-to-grow-your-brain>

Activity 1, part 3: The truth about your brain (ES/MS) Khan Academy. Retrieved from <https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/learnstorm-growth-mindset-activities-us/elementary-and-middle-school-activities/activity-1-the-truth-about-your-brain/a/reflecting-on-activity-1>

Teaching Facing Lesson Guide:

2018 Activity 1 TG: The truth about your brain (ES/MS) Khan Academy. Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11eSUBP2whAExwDf0Co7yEWwgq6TKII95AsthmpCK-SU/edit>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In Chapter 1, what is the problem that Jake is explaining? Why is he so anxious?
2. On page 3, Jake says that “music notes are all Greek to me!” Using context clues from pages 2 & 3, what does this expression mean?
3. Did Jake use a surveillance drone to look at the answers of Syreeta Simmons-Kapurnisky? What are the images truly portraying? Why do you think Jake express himself this way?
4. Why does Jake draw certain parts of his body (i.e. left arm, a couple of eyelashes) that he thinks deserves to get into MAA? Using inferencing and context clues, what do you think he is saying?

5. What is Jake's perception (how does he think about) of his sister Lisa? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
6. What three letter word does Pierre, Lisa's boyfriend, insert into all of his nicknames for Jake? Why do you think he does this with Jake?
7. Looking at page 19, the "List of Bro-Nouns" by Pierre, write down 3-5 of the bro-nouns and infer their origin. Example: "Bro-bama" could be a reference to Barack Obama, the 44th President and "Bro-gurt" is most likely referencing yogurt.
8. In Chapter 4, Jake creates a list of bullet points about each of his classmates that he interacts with the most. What do all these summaries have in common?
9. In your own words, describe three important traits about Mr. Allen and two classmates of your choice.
10. Reread *The Shortest Giant in the World* (pages 49-54). Summarize the events of the short story. What do you think Jake learned about himself through writing this story?
11. What are the steps that Evan takes to get Jake to open up about what is bothering him? Why does Evan feel that he can be the person to get Jake to open up to him?
12. What advice does Evan give Jake and how does Jake apply said advice? What advice would you have given Jake?
13. In Chapter 8, Jake makes his first major attempt at "Outweirding the Weirdos." What does Jake do, and how do the students and staff react to that idea and later the final product? Why does he choose to do this? What do you predict his next move will be?
14. Look at the gravestones on page 84. Why are those three names used?
15. Using text evidence from earlier in the story, what do you think Mr. Allen meant about the talent show when he said, "The answers are in your hearts?"
16. What do Pierre and Lisa tell Jake about the talent show? How does this make Jake feel? How do you think he should plan for the talent show?
17. Do your best to complete the rhyming word puzzle on page 111.
18. Using context clues from page 114-116, explain what Jake originally thought Forrest meant by scat, and what Forrest actually meant. Talk about a time that you used a word and someone thought you were using that word's homonym.
19. Who tells Jake that he is talented, and what do they say is his talent? What impact do you think this will have on Jake?
20. What causes Jake to verbalize his observation about the piano keys? What does he say and how does the crowd react? Do you think that this would have happened if he was confident in his ability to play the song again?
21. What is the theme of what Jake talks about? How did you infer this?
22. How do the people in Jake's life react to his new-found comedic chops? Be specific, citing text evidence. Do you think his teacher's will encourage his new found talent? Why or why not?
23. What does Azure mean when she says, "sorry I let the cat out of the bag." What does this expression mean and using text evidence, what is she referring to? Discuss another idiom you know and what it means.
24. What is Jake's new plan for his time at M&AA? How do you anticipate this change to work out for him? What potential challenges may he face?
25. There is a sequel coming out in March 2019, based on how the book ended, what are some challenges that Jake may face in the upcoming installment?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Writing:

These three activities will use the BBC comedy classroom to teach students how comedy and a strong competence in writing are directly connected. In the first activity, students will practice writing jokes and review how homonyms and puns are used to create assuming expressions. In the second activity students will begin to write skits of their own. Students will look at a spoof of a commercial, analyze it and then look at examples of how to interpret an image literally and how to interpret it as a spoof or a ridiculous interpretation. The final product for part II will be making a skit of their own, similar to the assignment that Mr. Allen assigned Jake's homeroom class. Finally, students will look at images to create captions that are both realistic and absurd, in order to be able to draw a comic. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03hfdlv>

CBBC: FIT - Darts Workout

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7rRMKXXcRA>

BBC Comedy classroom video of a spoof fitness video.

BBC Comedy Classroom, Having a Laugh

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4FmG38zP0GNJKwrMkG9pqMC/welcome-to-comedy-classroom-for-primary-schools>

Resources on skit writing, joke writing, and caption for costumes.

Social Studies:

Students will use the computer to look at a website that shows all of the performing arts schools in the country. They will then pick a school that is either geographically close to them or another factor, like diversity or academics, which can be ranked. Students will then look up information about the school, and make a presentation about the school, including its strengths, areas of growth and if applicable famous people that have attended said school.

2019 Best Schools for the Arts in America

<https://www.niche.com/k12/search/best-schools-for-the-arts/>

This site shows all of the performing arts schools and gives key measurable information about the school and how it ranks compared to other places. This will also be an introduction to students on rankings and how isolating certain factors can affect the search results.

Art:

Jake decides in the story to attempt to make a creation out of lunch room garbage and glue. Though his intention may have been to gain attention or try his hand at a new medium, recycled art projects are a great way to express creativity while also being ecofriendly. Students can bring in objects from home or teachers can have materials in stations for students to workshop their ideas and then put them together with hot glue, string, or another appropriate adhesive.

75 Recycled Art Projects for Kids

<https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2014/04/recycled-art-project-for-kids-2.html>

Provides ideas of what can be made based on the materials available.

Language Arts:

Throughout the book, an advanced reader can see the foreshadowing of Jake’s great triumph at the end of the story through his strong grasp of rhetorical devices. Young readers need to have an understanding of the definition of said devices, to be able to recognize them and eventually use them independently. The three focal points are homonyms, hyperbole, and idioms. Flocabulary uses great interactive lessons that can be teacher led, group work for students or assigned independently. www.flocabulary.com

Idioms, Flocabulary.

<https://www.flocabulary.com/unit/idioms/>

Introduces idioms and has built in checks for understanding on the concept.

Commonly Confused Words, Flocabulary

<https://www.flocabulary.com/unit/commonly-confused-words/>

Introduces homonyms and has built in checks for understanding on the concept.

Hyperbole, Flocabulary

<https://www.flocabulary.com/unit/hyperbole/>

Introduces hyperbole and has built in checks for understanding of the concept.

Vocabulary:

Phi	Philosophy	Azure	Inspiration
Beta	Development	Acquaintance	Murmurs
Gamma	Inconvenience	Confining	Reluctantly
Surveillance	Canvases	Didgeridoo	Circumstances
World Domination	Mandrill	Specimens	Deranged
Rhetorical	Homonyms	Hyperbole	Idioms

RELATED WEB SITES:

Tabletop Loose Parts- Creative Activity for Kids.

<https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2012/04/tabletop-loose-parts-creative-activity-for-kids.html>

Provides guidance on how to set up an area with loose recycled parts for children to interact with and make a new creation.

Jake the Fake Book Trailer

The author, Craig Robinson, interviews Jake about the book.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B59eRXixpXM>