



| TEACHERS' GUIDE

Getting to Know Ruben Plotnick

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 1st - 3rd |



ABOUT THIS STORY

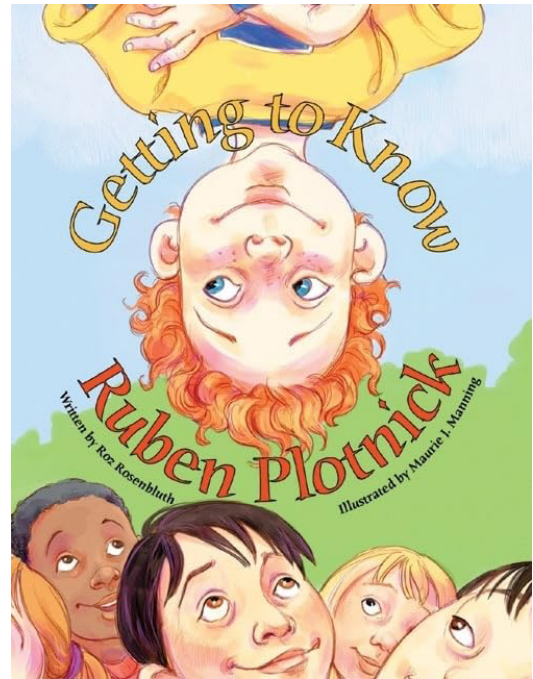
SYNOPSIS

What do you get when you put together the coolest kid in class, an unpredictable live-in grandmother, and a caring but anxious grandson? Disaster?

No. You get to know Ruben Plotnick.

David is worried about how zany Ruben Plotnick will react when he meets Grandma Rosie, who often says and does unexpected things. Will Ruben make fun of her to their classmates? Will he imitate her whispery voice? What will he do if Grandma Rosie suddenly wants to dance?

This heartwarming story of senility and school-age embarrassment reveals the importance of looking beneath the surface to really get to know someone.



THEMES IN THE STORY

- Friendship
- Tolerance
- Family
- Aging
- Grandparents



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Suggested grade level: 1st - 3rd

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARD

Reading Literature: Students read and respond to works of literature with emphasis on comprehension, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence.

Standards listed below are for 1st and 2nd grades, but can be adapted to 3rd grade standards.

BEFORE VIEWING

Standards: *CCSS.SL.1.1, CCSS.SL.2.1*

Objective: Tap into prior knowledge and build background to prepare for viewing the story.

Procedure: Build background with students by discussing the following points. This may be done on the carpet with A/B partners or at their desks.

- What do you see on the cover?
- What do you think the story might be about just by looking at the cover?
- Have you ever had a new person join your class or group? What was that like?
- Do you know any older people in your life?
- What do you think it means to judge a person based on their actions?

DURING VIEWING

Standards: *CCSS.SL.1.2, CCSS.SL.2.2*

Objective: Watch the story and answer the following questions.

Procedure: Stop the video at noted times to ask questions or pose prompts from the suggested list below:

- What is your opinion about Ruben at the beginning of the book? *(01:08)*
- What clues does the author provide at the beginning of the story of what might happen? *(01:20)*
- What do you notice about Grandma Rosie? How does David seem to feel about her? *(03:06)*
- Why is David worried about Ruben meeting his grandma? *(03:28)*
- What does Ruben's reaction to Grandma Rosie tell you about him? *(05:59)*
- Why do you think Ruben decided to play along with Grandma Rosie instead of laughing or ignoring her? *(06:13)*

AFTER VIEWING

Standards: *CCSS.RL.1.1, CCSS.RL.2.1*

Objective: Students will ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Procedure: Students will discuss the following questions with their carpet or table partners:

- Why did David's opinion about Ruben change?
- How do you feel about Grandma Rosie after watching the story?
- Many people are different. Do you think it's important to learn about people and their differences before forming an opinion about them?

READING RESPONSE

Standards: *CCSS.RL.1.1, CCSS.RL.2.1*

Objective: Answer reading prompt using details from the text to support the response.

Materials:

- Reading response journal
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Remind the class that the story happens at David's house and ask the following prompt:

Imagine you are visiting David's house and meet Grandma Rosie. What would you do if she asked you to dance with her? Write your response in your own words, using details from the story.

2. Allow time for the group to discuss the prompt.
3. Have students write their responses answering the above prompt in their reading response journals.

Note: Younger students may use sentence stems to help them with their responses. For example:

If Grandma Rosie asked me to dance, I would _____
_____.

WRITING AND ART – USING DESCRIPTIVE WORDS

Standards: *CCSS.2.L.6: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe.*

Objective: Students will create minibooks by folding a single sheet of paper in half, using it to celebrate someone close to them (grandparent, parent, sibling, etc.) with beautiful words to describe them on the inside of the book.

Materials:

- List of Adjectives worksheet (page 7)
- Person Outline template (page 8)
- Blank paper for minibook (heavy paper stock preferred)
- Pencils, crayons and/or markers
- Glue
- Scissors

Procedure:

1. Give students the following prompt:

Design a book cover for a special person in your life. On the inside of the book, write down all the words that describe them.

2. Ask students to brainstorm adjectives (descriptive words) about older people they admire (e.g. caring, funny, creative, talented, smart, helpful, imaginative, loving, special, unique, etc.). Use the List of Adjectives worksheet as a guide, if needed.
3. Give students a Person Outline template to cut out and glue onto the cover of their minibooks. They can decorate the cover with drawings and designs. Inside, students will write beautiful, vivid words to describe someone they admire. Use staples or fold the paper to bind the pages together and create minibooks.

Extension Activity – Exploring Idioms: An idiom is a phrase or expression that has a figurative meaning that's different from the literal meaning of the words in the phrase.

Discuss the idiom, "Don't judge a book by its cover." This phrase means we shouldn't judge the value or worth of something—or someone—based solely on outward appearance. It's a metaphor that applies to various situations, including forming opinions about people, TV shows, jobs, and restaurants. This idiom reflects the idea that appearances can be misleading. Something might look appealing on the outside but fail to meet expectations, or the opposite—it might not look impressive but turn out to be valuable.

Synonyms for this phrase include: *Clothes don't make the man.; The cowl does not make the monk.; All that glitters is not gold.; Looks can be deceiving.; Appearances are deceptive.*

Use this discussion to connect to the story's theme, encouraging students to think about how they form opinions of others.

SCIENCE – UNDERSTANDING THE SENSES WITH GRANDMA ROSIE

Objective: Students will explore how we use our senses to interact with the world, connecting it to Grandma Rosie’s character and how Ruben responded to her unique way of experiencing the world.

Materials:

- Blindfolds (optional)
- Various textured objects (e.g. soft fabric, sandpaper, sponge)
- Mystery bags with objects that have distinct smells (e.g. orange peel, cinnamon sticks, bar of soap)
- Small cups with different tastes (e.g. salty water, sugar water, lemon juice)
- Instruments or noise-making objects (e.g. bells, shakers, clapping)

Procedure:

1. Discuss how Grandma Rosie might experience the world differently from the other characters in the book. Explain that we all use our senses—sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing—to understand our surroundings.
2. Set up five sensory stations, one for each sense. At each station, students will explore objects and record their observations.

Touch Station: Feel different textured objects and describe them.

Smell Station: Guess what’s inside the mystery bags by smelling them.

Taste Station: Taste small samples of salty, sweet, and sour water and describe the flavor.

Hearing Station: Identify sounds made by different instruments or objects.

Sight Station: Observe objects closely and describe details like color, shape, and size.

3. Put students into groups to discuss how these senses help us understand the world. Have them answer the questions:

How do you think Grandma Rosie’s unique way of experiencing the world affects her daily life?

How do you think Ruben used his senses to connect with her?

4. Have students draw or write about one sense they used today and how it might help someone like Grandma Rosie enjoy her day.

Extension Activity – Tie the activity back to empathy by discussing how understanding others’ experiences—like Ruben did—can help us to be more thoughtful and kind to others.

LIST OF ADJECTIVES

Adaptable: Easily adjusts to changes

Affectionate: Shows love and care

Agreeable: Pleasant and cooperative

Attentive: Pays careful attention

Authentic: True to oneself

Brave: Courageous in difficult situations

Calm: Relaxed and untroubled

Candid: Honest and straightforward

Caring: Shows empathy and concern

Cheerful: Happy and optimistic

Compassionate: Feels and shows sympathy

Creative: Imaginative and innovative

Curious: Eager to learn and explore

Daring: Bold and adventurous

Earnest: Sincere and serious

Easygoing: Relaxed and carefree

Empathetic: Understands others' feelings

Energetic: Full of energy

Faithful: Loyal and reliable

Fearless: Unafraid and bold

Generous: Willing to give freely

Gracious: Courteous and kind

Honest: Truthful and sincere

Humorous: Funny and entertaining

Intuitive: Understands instinctively

Joyful: Full of happiness

Just: Fair and righteous

Kind: Caring and considerate

Loyal: Faithful and reliable

Magnanimous: Generous and forgiving

Open-minded: Receptive to new ideas

Optimistic: Positive outlook on life

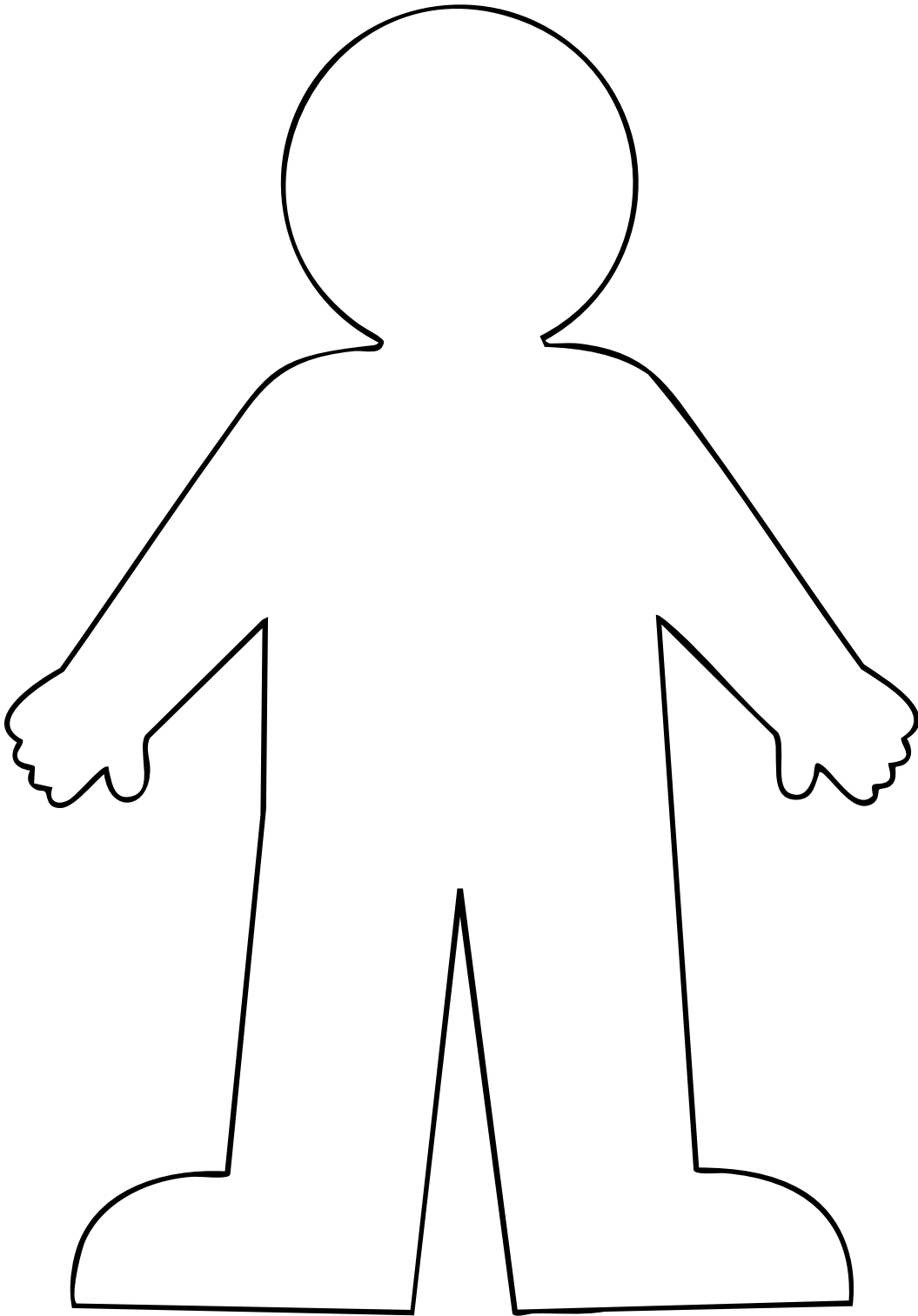
Passionate: Shows strong enthusiasm

Philosophical: Thoughtful and wise

Sincere: Genuine and honest

Sociable: Enjoys social interactions

Thoughtful: Considerate of others' need



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide enhances the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum by providing supplemental learning opportunities alongside quality children’s literature, engaging students as they listen to expressive read alouds.

Suggested story related activities in this guide are aligned with ELA Common Core Standards.