

Substitute Creature Educators' Guide

About the Book

When a giant nor'easter dumps a blanket of snow on the village of Dunwich, Massachusetts, Robert Arthur and his friends find themselves marooned inside Lovecraft Middle School. The kids have no choice but to spend the night—while snacking on cafeteria food, sleeping on classroom floors, and facing off against a mysterious substitute teacher who may have a sinister secret. The latest adventure in the Lovecraft Middle School series features more adventures, more outrageous monsters, and another terrifying lenticular cover!

Genre

Children's horror

Topics/Themes

- paranormal events
- zombies/the undead
- courage
- nor'easters and other storms
- integrity
- privilege/entitlement

Zombies

Speaking and Listening 4–6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Activate students' prior knowledge and increase their background knowledge before reading by having a class discussion about zombies. What are the

characteristics of zombies? How do people become zombies? As a class, decide the defining characteristics of zombies (for instance, is the Doctor in *Dr. Who* a zombie because he regenerates? Why or why not?). The book *Zombies* by Stephen Krensky (in the Monster Chronicles series) is a helpful, kid-friendly reference for defining the term. Let students discuss books and movies about zombies. View clips from movies with undead characters, such as the title character in the 1931 Boris Karloff *Frankenstein*, Sparky in *Frankenweenie*, the Inferi in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (see HarryPotterWikia.com/wiki/inferius), and the quartermaster and ship's gunner in *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*.

Reading: Literature 5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Using the graphic organizer “Comparing Zombies” included in this guide, have students work with partners or in small groups and compare and contrast Miss Carcasse with other fictional zombies. Have students find evidence in *Substitute Creature* to support their explanations of Miss Carcasse’s characteristics.

Writing 3–7.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Have students complete the “Comparing Zombies” graphic organizer by imagining an original zombielike character and determining its characteristics (see the column labeled “Create your own zombie here”). Then have students illustrate their zombies and write a short story or comic strip about them.

Writing 3–7.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Determine whether students should take time to extend, revise, and publish their narratives about zombies or whether a shorter, less formal writing task to be kept in students’ writing journals would work better for your class. Have students share

their sketches and stories with the class or in small groups.

Extreme Weather

Reading: Informational Text 5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

The localized nor'easter in *Substitute Creature* creates one of the central problems in the story. To help students make connections between the novel and the real world, have partners choose extreme weather conditions (e.g., tornados, hurricanes, blizzards, ice storm) to research. Make sure at least one pair chooses nor'easters. Help students find books in the school library and information online about these weather conditions. To integrate information from these sources, have students use the Idea Web graphic organizer in this guide, or access it online at <http://printables.scholastic.com/printables/detail/?id=35517>.

Students will write their extreme weather event in the center circle and then write answers to the following questions in the outlying circles:

- Where does this weather typically occur?
- At what time of year does this weather typically occur and how long does it last?
- Why is it dangerous? In other words, what happens during this weather event (e.g., high winds, hail, freezing temperatures)?
- How should people prepare for this weather (e.g., evacuate, board windows, buy a generator)?

Writing 4–5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Using their completed Idea Web, students can write a “storm warning”—a script in which they pretend to be meteorologists predicting the type of weather they chose to learn about. Show several clips of weather reports on television newscasts to

provide a model for students' mock forecasts. The following websites may be helpful for your class:

- **<http://misssandsweather.blogspot.com>**
Watch videos of fourth-graders presenting weather forecasts.
- **YouTube**
Search for weather forecasts in your city and for "Studio C—Five Day Weather Forecast," a fictional, humorous weather report that emphasizes symbols on the weather map.
- **<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/extreme-research-report>**
This site includes activities and lesson plans for extreme weather, as well as a tool to help students generate weather forecasts called "Analyze: Forecast the Weather."

Discuss the format of the presentation, the details included in forecasts, and the different symbols used to represent a variety of weather conditions. Use a rubric to establish writing expectations for your students.

Language 3–6.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.

Determine specific weather-related words and phrases students need to understand in order to write accurate, precise weather forecasts (e.g., cold front, barometer, meteorologist, squall). Help students become familiar with these terms and include them in their mock storm-warning reports.

Speaking and Listening 5.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Have students present their storm warning to the class or in small groups. Use the rubric below to establish presentation expectations.

Requirements	Yes	Sometimes	No
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Ideas sequenced logically			
Includes all appropriate information (where, when, what, how)			
Speaks clearly at an understandable pace			

Speaking and Listening 5–6.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Have students prepare maps with appropriate weather symbols to use in their “Extreme Weather Warning” presentations. Add this component to the rubric above to hold students accountable for their visual display.

Robert’s Dilemma

Speaking and Listening 3–6.2 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

After reading Chapter 15, use the discussion web included in this guide to extend students’ thinking on the challenge Professor Tillinghast presents to Robert on pages 132–136. With partners or in small groups, have students consider the moral implications of the decision Robert must make. (To learn more about discussion webs, see <http://www.readingeducator.com/strategies/web.htm>.)

Vocabulary

Chapters 1–5

wedged, blustery*, murky, perched, parallel, confined*, enchanted, flanked, vortex, centripetal, accumulating, shambling, nor’easter*, evacuating, orifice

Chapters 6–10

disorienting, panoramic, surreal, punctured, meteorologist, engineer (v.), animated, generator*

Chapters 11–15

embedded, stalactites, descended*/-ing*, pungent*, group mentality, contemplated, propane gas, Bunsen burner, valve, beakers, ethereal, flabbergasted, flailing*, squall, lurking, incomprehensible, extinguished, cackling, corridor*, dormant, sustenance, ravenously, instantaneous, demonic, hideous, wreaking havoc, chaos, taper (n.), vial*, indulge, millennia, subterranean, tolerate, limbo, inconsequential

Chapters 16–19

jubilant, liability, garments, spectacularly

*Terms used more than once in *Substitute Creature*.

Language 3–6.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

In Chapter 11, Robert and Karina meet the Old Ones and use tools in the school's chemistry lab to try to keep the Old Ones from entering the school. Discuss what is happening in and around the chemistry lab in Chapter 11. Help students find each of the terms below in the text and discuss whether the context provides clues to the meaning of the words. Using realia or photos, show and describe the purpose of the lab equipment mentioned in the chapter. Then have students make illustrations of Lovecraft Middle School's chemistry lab as it may have looked in Chapter 11. Have students label the terms in their illustrations.

- periodic table of elements
- butane lighter
- valve
- propane gas/tank
- vial
- Bunsen burner

Language 3–6.5c Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homographs) to better understand each of the words.

Make a Vocabulary Intensity Continuum to help students learn the subtle differences between synonymous words. (To learn more about Vocabulary Intensity Continuums, see <http://textproject.org/professional-development/text-matters/unique-words-require-unique-instruction/>.) The terms on the

continuums increase in intensity or degree from left to right. Use the continuums below to get started.

After you show and discuss a few, students can use print and digital thesauruses to help develop continuums for other terms in *Substitute Creature*. Then play Snapshot, a game similar to charades in which the class looks away while a group of three students pose in a way that illustrates one of the terms on the continuum. On a cue, class members look at the “snapshot” and guess which word the students are miming.

<u>pushed</u>	<u>wedged**</u>	<u>stuffed</u>	<u>forced</u>	<u>crammed</u>	
<u>permit</u>	<u>tolerate**</u>	<u>condone</u>	<u>accept</u>	<u>embrace</u>	
<u>poked</u>	<u>pricked</u>	<u>pierced</u>	<u>punctured**</u>	<u>stabbed</u>	
<u>strong</u>	<u>sharp</u>	<u>pervasive</u>	<u>potent</u>	<u>pungent**</u>	
<u>breezy</u>	<u>windy</u>	<u>blustery**</u>	<u>gusty</u>	<u>squally**</u>	<u>stormy</u>
<u>unattractive</u>	<u>ugly</u>	<u>unsightly</u>	<u>repulsive</u>	<u>hideous**</u>	

**Term (or a form of the term) used in *Substitute Creature*.

Many other interesting words in *Substitute Creature* may work well along an Intensity Continuum, such as the following:

murky, animated, embedded, flabbergasted, lurking, ravenously, demonic, havoc, chaos, indulge, jubilant

About the Author

Charles Gilman is the author of the Lovecraft Middle School series—and the pen name of Jason Rekulak, an editor who lives with his wife and children in Philadelphia. When he’s not dreaming up new tales of Lovecraft Middle School, he’s biking along the fetid banks of the Schuylkill River in search of two-headed rats and other horrific beasts.

About the Illustrator

From an early age, Eugene Smith dreamed of drawing monsters, mayhem, and madness. Today, he is living the dream in Chicago, Illinois, where he resides with his wife, Mary, and their daughters, Audrey and Vivienne.

Name _____

Comparing Zombies

Character's Name	Miss Carcasse			Create your own zombie here
Looks like...				
Smells like...				
Acts like...				
Moves like...				
Who reanimated this character?				
How did this character become reanimated?	The book does not say.			
Setting (Where and when does this zombie "live"?)				

Name _____

Substitute Creature Discussion Web

Should Robert give Lionel to Professor Tillinghast
in exchange for Karina's freedom?

Yes, because...

No, because...

Conclusion

Idea Web

