



Email: bridget@paperdragonreads.com Phone: (407) 212-7759

"Best of All Worlds" Lesson Plan Guide

by Kenneth Oppel

Unit Overview

Duration: 1 week

Grade Level: 9–12

Program: Florida Teens Read (FTR)

Subject Integration: ELA, Science Fiction, Ethics, Social-Emotional Learning

Essential Question: *What do extreme circumstances reveal about family, identity, and what we owe to strangers?*

Learning Objectives — Students will be able to:

- Analyze how Oppel uses confinement as a narrative device to force character and relationship development
 - Examine how the blended family dynamic creates emotional tension that the dome makes inescapable
 - Evaluate the ethical questions raised by the dome's creation and the arrival of the second family
 - Engage with philosophical questions about survival ethics, trust, and constructed community
 - Express understanding through analytical writing and creative world-building projects
-

ONE-WEEK LESSON PLAN

Day 1: Into the Dome — World-Building and Immediate Stakes

Objective: Establish the dome scenario, Xavier's family situation, and the novel's central questions

Materials: Book, world-building analysis chart

Opening (10 min):

- Quick-write: "You wake up tomorrow and everything around you has changed—without explanation. What's your first move?"
- Partner share

Main Activity (35 min):

- Introduce Xavier and the dome: map the physical parameters, the resources, the mysterious assistance
- Establish the family context before the dome: What tensions already exist between Xavier, his dad, and his stepmother?
- Discuss: How does the dome change the stakes of those tensions—from annoying to inescapable?
- Introduce the central questions: Who did this? Why? What do they want from Xavier's family?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "What is the most important thing Xavier needs to figure out in the first week—survival-wise? Relationship-wise?"

Assessment: World-building comprehension, character context, central question identification

Day 2: Family Under Pressure — Blended Dynamics and No Escape

Objective: Analyze how the dome forces the family to address what normal life allowed them to avoid

Materials: Book, relationship mapping worksheet

Opening (10 min):

- Think-pair-share: "What conversations do families avoid when life is busy and there are always places to go? What happens when there's nowhere to go?"

Main Activity (35 min):

- Map the relationship dynamics: Xavier ↔ dad, Xavier ↔ stepmother, parents ↔ each other—where are the fault lines?



Email: bridget@paperdragonreads.com Phone: (407) 212-7759

- Track how each relationship changes across the first period of confinement
- Discuss: What does Oppel understand about blended family tension that makes this premise so effective?
- Analysis: What does the dome make possible in terms of relationship development that ordinary life couldn't?

Closing (5 min):

- Quick-write: "What does Xavier's relationship with his dad look like before the dome vs. after a year inside it?"

Assessment: Relationship analysis, character development tracking, thematic connection

Day 3: The Mysterious Assistance — Trust, Power, and the Ethics of Help

Objective: Examine what the mysterious assistance represents and what accepting it means

Materials: Book, ethics discussion framework

Opening (10 min):

- Discussion: "Is it ever wise to accept help without knowing who's offering it or what they want in return? What's your framework?"

Main Activity (35 min):

- Analyze the mysterious assistance: What does it provide? What does it withhold? What does that pattern suggest about its source?
- Introduce a philosophical framework: What is the ethics of accepting help from an unknown and potentially controlling power?
- Connect to real-world parallels: When do individuals or communities accept the terms of institutional power without full information?
- Discuss: What would it mean to refuse the assistance—and why doesn't Xavier's family?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "What does accepting the assistance tell us about Xavier's family—about what they value and what they're willing to tolerate?"

Assessment: Ethical reasoning, power dynamics analysis, real-world connection

Day 4: The Second Family — Community, Conflict, and What We Owe Strangers

Objective: Analyze the arrival of the second family and what it demands of Xavier's character

Materials: Book, conflict analysis chart

Opening (10 min):

- Partner discussion: "When strangers arrive in a situation where resources are scarce, what do you owe them? Does it depend on who they are?"

Main Activity (35 min):

- Track the second family's arrival: What is Xavier's initial response? What does he want to do vs. what does he do?
- Introduce lifeboat ethics: When resources are finite, how should they be distributed?
- Discuss: What has Xavier learned during years in the dome that prepares—or fails to prepare—him for this encounter?
- Theme synthesis: What does the novel ultimately say about community, survival, and the obligations we have to strangers in crisis?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "What does the second family's arrival reveal about who Xavier has become inside the dome?"

Assessment: Ethics application, character arc synthesis, community obligation analysis

Day 5: Analytical and Creative Response

Objective: Express understanding through analytical or creative writing

Materials: Writing and research materials, project choice cards

Opening (10 min):

- Preview project options; students select and begin



Email: bridget@paperdragonreads.com Phone: (407) 212-7759

Main Activity (35 min):

- Option A: Analytical essay — "How does Opper use the dome as a narrative device to explore questions about family, trust, and identity?"
- Option B: Write Xavier's journal across three time points: first week, one year in, the day the second family arrives
- Option C: Philosophical argument — "Is it ever ethical to confine a group of people for their own good? Use the novel and at least one real-world parallel."
- Share in pairs or small groups

Closing (5 min):

- Class closing: "One thing 'Best of All Worlds' made me think about family, constraint, or trust differently is..."

Assessment: Writing quality, philosophical reasoning, thematic synthesis

Differentiation

- **Advanced learners:** Research real-world isolation psychology (Antarctic expeditions, long-duration spaceflight) and write a comparative analysis
 - **Students needing support:** World-building graphic organizer; relationship mapping template; sentence starters for analytical and philosophical writing
 - **English Language Learners:** Visual world-building supports; collaborative discussion options; pre-teach ethical reasoning vocabulary
-

Materials List

- Class set of "Best of All Worlds"
- World-building analysis chart (Day 1)
- Relationship mapping worksheet (Day 2)
- Ethics discussion framework (Day 3)
- Conflict analysis chart (Day 4)
- Project choice cards and writing materials (Day 5)