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"The Bug Bandits" Lesson Plan Guide

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Unit Overview

Duration: 1 week

Grade Level: 3–5

Subject Integration: ELA, Science, Social-Emotional Learning

Essential Question: How can deep knowledge and teamwork help us protect what matters most to our community?

Learning Objectives — Students will be able to:

- Analyze how Liberty's insect expertise drives the plot and empowers her actions
- Explore themes of resourcefulness, teamwork, and protecting community spaces
- Connect real insect defense mechanisms to the strategies used in the story
- Express understanding through creative and science-connected projects

ONE-WEEK LESSON PLAN

Day 1: Meet Liberty and the Insectarium

Objective: Build background knowledge and introduce the story's central conflict

Materials: Book, prior knowledge chart, insect overview resources

Opening (10 min):

- Quick-write: "What do you know about insects? What surprises you about them?"
- Share out and create a class "Bugs We Know" anchor chart

Main Activity (35 min):

- Introduce Liberty Jacobs and the Insectarium her father runs
- Discuss what an insectarium is and why it matters to a community
- Introduce the double threat: possible closure AND a planned robbery
- Ask: "How do you think Liberty feels? What would YOU do?"

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "What insect would you most want to protect—and why?"

Assessment: Prior knowledge activation, personal connection to character and setting

Day 2: Insects as Defense Experts

Objective: Explore real insect defense mechanisms and connect them to the story

Materials: Insect defense reference cards or slides, comparison chart

Opening (10 min):

- Think-pair-share: "What defenses have you seen insects use in real life?"

Main Activity (35 min):

- Teach 4–5 real insect defense strategies: chemical spray (bombardier beetle), camouflage, mimicry, armor, venom



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- Class creates a "Insect Defense Toolkit" chart together
- Connect each defense to a possible booby-trap idea: "How could Liberty use this?"
- Discuss: How does knowing science give Liberty a superpower?

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "Which insect defense is most clever? Give one reason."

Assessment: Science content understanding, creative application of knowledge

Day 3: Planning Like Liberty (Home Alone Meets Entomology)

Objective: Analyze Liberty's planning process and the power of teamwork

Materials: Story chapters covering the plan, teamwork graphic organizer

Opening (10 min):

- Quick-write: "What would YOUR booby-trap plan look like if you were protecting something you loved?"

Main Activity (35 min):

- Read/discuss chapters where Liberty hatches her plan
- Map Liberty's strategies on the board: which insect defense inspired each trap?
- Analyze teamwork: What does each friend contribute? Why is collaboration essential?
- Compare to Home Alone: What's similar? What makes Liberty's plan unique?

Closing (5 min):

- Partner share: "What would you add to Liberty's plan?"

Assessment: Planning analysis, collaboration understanding, intertextual thinking

Day 4: Community, Expertise, and What's Worth Protecting

Objective: Connect the story's themes to students' own lives and communities

Materials: Discussion prompts, character arc worksheet

Opening (10 min):

- Discussion: "Have you ever had to defend or stand up for something you cared about?"

Main Activity (35 min):

- Track Liberty's character arc: How does she grow from beginning to end?
- Discuss: What does the Insectarium give the community that can't be replaced?
- Pose the big question: "What place or thing in YOUR community would you fight to protect?"
- Share: One expert skill you have that could help solve a real problem

Closing (5 min):

- Exit ticket: "What is the most important theme in this book? Use one example from the story."

Assessment: Character development analysis, personal connection, theme identification

Day 5: Creative Project and Celebration

Objective: Apply learning through a short creative project and share work

Materials: Art supplies, writing materials, presentation space

Opening (10 min):

- Preview project options and select one

Main Activity (35 min):

- Option A: Design your own Insectarium exhibit—choose an insect, illustrate it, and label its defense
- Option B: Write a short scene from the perspective of one of the insects during the heist
- Option C: Draw a "Bug Defense Blueprint" showing Liberty's booby-trap plan with insect labels



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- Share projects with a partner or the class

Closing (5 min):

- Class reflection: "One thing this book changed about how I see insects is..."

Assessment: Creative expression, science integration, synthesis of key themes

Differentiation

- **Advanced learners:** Research a specific insect's defense in depth and teach it to the class
 - **Students needing support:** Use graphic organizers and visual insect reference cards throughout
 - **English Language Learners:** Pre-teach insect vocabulary with visuals; offer bilingual reference materials
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Materials List

- Class set of "The Bug Bandits"
- Insect defense reference cards or slides (bombardier beetle, stick insect, etc.)
- Chart paper and markers for anchor charts
- Art supplies for Day 5 projects
- Graphic organizers for character and plot tracking