



**ROBYN REPORTS:
THE NUTTY NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY**

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A Story From Hot Topics Hot Serials

Teacher's Guide



Introduction:

This guide offers you chapter-by-chapter lesson plans and activities to enhance the learning experience as your students read the story. For each chapter you'll find pre-reading questions, a vocabulary list, open-ended comprehension questions, a writing prompt, a newspaper activity for integrating newspaper use into the unit, and a "daily edit" which provides you with a paragraph from the story for your students to correct. They can then check their work against the published story to see if they caught all of the editing "mistakes." The questions and assignments are written directly to students so that you can use them as is.

Summary of the story:

Robyn and her intrepid reporters set out to cover the neighborhood block party so they can write about it for that week's edition of their newspaper, *The Robyn Report*. They encounter a series of wild and wacky mysteries that go on throughout the fun-filled and action-packed event.

Chapter One: The Big Day**Summary:**

Robyn is a young girl who produces a weekly neighborhood newspaper, *The Robyn Report*. She is waiting at her house for her reporters. They are late but one by one they arrive and get ready for their assignments. Suddenly, Rowdy Roxanne shows up, much to Robyn's dismay.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

Introduce your students to the concept of a neighborhood. Brainstorm a list of neighborhood names in your area. Ask for a show of hands indicating how many students in your class live in each neighborhood. If you have a number of neighborhoods represented in your class, you may want to poll the class and put the results on the board for a follow-up graphing assignment.

Ask students to talk about what the neighborhood is like where they live. What characteristics are unique to their area? Have they ever attended a block party? What do they predict might happen at Robyn's block party? Write their predictions on the board and keep them posted until the story unit is complete so that students can check their predictions.

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word or phrase in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

reporter
sixth sense
deliver
issue
Thermos
pajamas

glares

Comprehension Check:

1. What does Robyn mean when she says she comes from a “family of reporters?” Her grandpa, her mom and her sister are all reporters.
2. How does Robyn spend her weekends?
On Saturday, she types *The Robyn Report* into her computer. On Sunday, she delivers the issue to her readers for a charge of 25 cents.
3. Why doesn’t Robyn have all week to prepare this week’s issue?
This is the day of the block party and the entire issue will be about that.
4. Why is Corinna grumpy?
She is not a morning person and it is morning.

Bonus:

What words or phrases in this chapter give an insight into what Robyn’s personality is like? What can you learn about and conclude about Robyn from reading this chapter?

Newspaper Activity:

This week’s issue of *The Robyn Report* will be all about the neighborhood block party. Clearly, that is the most important story of the week in that newspaper’s community. Allow your students time to look at your local newspaper for five minutes. What do they conclude is the most important story of the day? Facilitate a discussion about what makes news important. Students can write paragraphs telling what they think is the most important news today and telling why they think so.

Writing Prompt:

If you were going to start your own newspaper, what would you write about? What do you think a good newspaper should include?

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

Usually I have an entire week to prepare the report not for this issue though. Today is the neighborhood block party. Its always held on saturday. All of this weeks issue is going to be about the party. My readers are expecting to get *The robyn Report* tomorrow. This means I have a long day ahead of me The entire newspaper has to be done today.

Learning standards:

predicting, getting the main idea, using punctuation, editing, analyzing

Chapter Two: Rowdy Roxanne

Summary:

Roxanne tells Robyn that if she lets her help with *The Robyn Report*, Roxanne will guarantee Robyn an interview with Sarah, the seed-spitting champion. Then they find out there's a food fight at the library and off they go. The block party is under way.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

At the end of the first chapter, Robyn saw someone coming down the basement steps whom she described as the last person she wanted to see. Allow your students to guess the identity of that person.

As the kids head out to cover the block party, Robyn is going to motivate them to do a good job. She's going to ask about their motto. What do your students think the motto of a neighborhood newspaper like this one should be? Give them an opportunity to think of good mottos and write them on the board. After reading the chapter, compare their motto with the one from the story. If they had a personal motto, what would it be?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

interview
chaos
officially
talent

Comprehension Check:

1. What does Roxanne offer in exchange for getting to help with *The Robyn Report*?
She says she can guarantee an interview with Sarah, the seed-spitting champion.
2. What is Logan's announcement?
He says there's chaos at the bake sale, something fishy is happening at the baseball field, and there's a food fight at the library.
3. Why does Robyn love the block party?
She loves it because you never know what's going to happen.
4. Will Robyn get the interview with Sarah?
Yes, she'll get it because she gave Roxanne a story to cover – the petting zoo.

Newspaper Activity:

When Robyn spots the food fight at the library, she begins jotting notes and taking photos for her newspaper. She thinks it's a great story because everyone is laughing and having fun. As editor, Robyn decides what goes into her newspaper. She likes stories that are good news. Why is a neighborhood block party "good news?" Are there any "good news" stories in your local newspaper? Find one and summarize it. Talk with your class about the amount of "good news" in the newspaper. Do you think it's the right amount? Why?

Writing Prompt:

The people in Robyn's neighborhood are enjoying fun times together. Write about a time when people in your neighborhood had fun together or worked together toward a common goal.

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

we have to get started" I say.

J.P. Logan, and corinna are watching me. they know how important this day is. But, I notice that Roxanne is watching JP. She does not know how important this day is

"J.P. I need you to cover the softball game. Find out what's fishy at the field."

"You got it J.P. says.

Learning standards:

analyzing, writing creatively, editing, using punctuation

Chapter Three: Missing in Action**Summary:**

An animal is missing from the petting zoo. Robyn and Roxanne help look for it. Robyn begins looking through Mrs. Peterson's petunia patch.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

What kinds of animals do your students think might be found in the neighborhood petting zoo? What kinds of pets have they seen in their neighborhood? Which animal is most likely to be the one that got away?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

disturbs

rounds

ferret

shrub

towers

Comprehension Check:

1. Why is Robyn worried about Roxanne's crying?

If Roxanne cries, it will be loud and everyone will be disturbed.

2. What animals are found in the petting zoo?

There are dogs, cats, hamsters, fish, rabbits, two birds and even a ferret.

3. Which animal is missing and why doesn't Robyn like those?

A lizard is missing. Robyn thinks that lizards are like snakes and she does not like snakes.

4. Why is Mrs. Peterson annoyed with Robyn? How does Robyn solve that problem?

Mrs. Peterson finds Robyn in her petunia patch and that bothers her. Robyn tells Mrs. Peterson that she is considering doing a story about the petunias.

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn dislikes lizards and snakes, but she's doing a story on one. Do your students think that reporters are interested in the topics of all stories they write? Ask students to imagine that they are reporters for your local newspaper. Have them choose a story from today's paper that they would be most interested in writing about, and then choose a story they would be least interested in. They should write a paragraph explaining each of their choices.

Writing Prompt:

Robyn told Mrs. Peterson a little fib about the reason why she was in the petunias. Perhaps she was trying to keep herself out of trouble, or perhaps she didn't want to scare Mrs. Peterson with the news that there was a lizard in the flowers. Either way, is it all right to lie, ever? Ask students to write a paragraph giving their views on lying and when it might be permissible, if ever.

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

The neighborhood petting zoo is one of the most popular events of the block party
Anyone can bring a pet. I see J.P.s little sister Allison. Shes holding their cat, Buster.
They are in Crazy cat Corner. I look around the yard to see the other animals. There are
dogs, cats hamsters fish, rabbits, two birds, and even a ferret. I can see how an animal
could go missing. This backyard is ... well ... its like a zoo

Learning standards:

values clarification, writing persuasively, constructing paragraphs

Chapter Four: Leaping Lizards!

Summary:

The kids find the lizard. Robyn heads over to the seed-spitting contest. Before she gets there, she finds out there's trouble at the bake sale.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

Do your students think the kids will find the lizard? Why?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

trembling

details

arched

defense

mechanism

predator

Comprehension Check:

1. How did Robyn find out where the lizard was?

She heard Allison scream when she saw something. Robyn guessed that the thing Allison saw was the lizard.

2. Why do chameleons change color?

They change color so that they can blend in with their backgrounds and be safe.

3. Which animal is the most popular one at the petting zoo?

The chameleon is suddenly the most popular. Everyone wants to know more about it.

Newspaper Activity:

There are many animals represented at the petting zoo. Have your students use the index to find the Pets for Sale or Pet Adoption ads in the newspaper. Have them find out how many different animals are represented there. Which ad would they be most likely to answer? Why?

Writing Prompt:

If your students were covering the petting zoo for *The Robyn Report*, how would they write the story? What would the headline be? Have them write a headline and a story about what happened at the petting zoo. Allow time for stories to be read aloud and compared.

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

I was over there Allison says, pointing to one of Mrs. Petersons shrubs. buster was lying in the shade Then, all of the sudden, he went into attack mode.”

Learning standards:

summarizing, skimming, analyzing

Chapter Five: Bake Sale Disaster

Summary:

Robyn discovers a crisis at the bake sale. The cookies taste terrible. Roxanne figures out that Jenna used salt instead of sugar. Robyn heads to the seed-spitting contest just in time.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

The chapter is titled “Bake Sale Disaster.” What do your students think the disaster might be? Have your students ever baked anything? What could possibly go wrong with baked goods?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

terrible

blubbers

duty

savoring

recipe

gross

Comprehension Check:

1. What is Robyn’s favorite kind of cookie?

Chocolate chip cookies are her favorite.

2. Why does Robyn buy three cookies?

She wants each of the reporters to taste one to see what is wrong with the cookies.

She says it’s a reporter’s duty.

3. Why does Robyn tell Jenna the truth about the cookie’s bad taste?

She doesn’t want to lie to Jenna.

4. Why did Jenna mistakenly put salt into the cookies instead of sugar?

The salt and the sugar are in containers that look the same. Salt and sugar also look the same.

Bonus Question:

Why do you think Robyn paid for the cookies? Why didn’t she just taste them without paying?

Newspaper Activity:

Jenna probably used a recipe when she baked the cookies. A recipe gives cooks step-by-step directions about how to make a food. Following directions is a great skill. Practice following directions by doing each of these with your newspaper:

- Circle the name of your newspaper on the front page.
- Turn to page 6 and put an X on the first word on the page.
- Find out the total number of pages in today's paper.
- What product or service is being sold in the first ad you see?
- Find out how many comic strips are in today's newspaper.
- Locate the name of a sports team and box it.
- Find a story in the newspaper that makes you smile and write a summary of it.

Writing Prompt:

What do you think about the relationship between Jenna and her little brother, Mike? Do they get along well? Write a paragraph telling what you learn about them in this chapter. Why do you think brothers and sisters tease each other?

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

Corinna takes off running Roxanne and I follow When we get to the bake sale, it doesnt take us long too find Jenna. Her little brother Mike, is standing in front of her, shouting.

Learning standards:

following directions, analyzing relationships, creative writing

Chapter Six: Time to Spit!**Summary:**

The spitting contest begins but comes to an abrupt halt when Henry accuses Sarah of cheating.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

Which sports do your students enjoying watching? Which do they like playing? Are those the same? Why? Would they prefer participating in or watching a seed-spitting contest?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

lawn

compete

contestants

round

survey
tarps
lunge

Comprehension Check:

1. Why doesn't Sarah's sister Madison compete in the spitting contest?
She is a good coach but not a good spitter.
2. How do they pick a winner in this contest?
The one whose seed goes the farthest wins.
3. What do the spitters do to get ready?
They move their tongues around in their mouths to build up saliva.

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn's mother says that reporters must be fair. They must be objective in reporting the news. That means that they should write the facts of a story but should not include their opinions. That's why Robyn should not say which person is her favorite spitter. Newspapers do offer opinions in some sections. Reviews are opinions. Editorial columns are opinions, too. Find an editorial in your newspaper. Read it and find three facts and three opinions.

Writing Prompt:

Sarah is accused of cheating. Cheating is a big problem in some schools. Have you ever seen anyone cheat during a test? Without telling that person's name, write a paragraph telling what you saw. Is it ever OK to cheat on a test? Why? Write another paragraph giving your opinion about cheating in school. Some people say that cheating hurts everyone in the class. How is that possible?

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

"How come you don't compete I ask her? "Doesn't spitting run in the family."

"Nope" She says. "I train Sarah, but I cant even spit two feet. I guess I'm a better coach than I am a spitter.

Learning standards:

identifying fact and opinion, writing persuasively

Chapter Seven: A Spitting Dispute

Summary:

Henry accuses Sarah of cheating by drinking soda instead of water. That is against the rules. Robyn suggests that Mrs. Rogers taste the drink to find out. It is water and the contest continues. No one can tell whose seed is the one that traveled farthest. Robyn announces that she knows for sure who won.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

Henry has accused Sarah of cheating. How do your students think Sarah will react? Have they ever been accused of doing something they did not do? How did that make them feel?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

dispute
competitor
swishes
unison
hesitate

Comprehension Check:

1. How do the spectators react when Sarah is accused of cheating? What kinds of things do they say?

Some people say that they always suspected her, and now they know how she won all of those years in a row.

2. How does Henry claim that Sarah is cheating?

He says that she is drinking soda to build up more saliva. That is against the rules.

3. How do they find the truth?

Mrs. Rogers tastes the drink and it is water.

Newspaper Activity:

If Sarah had been drinking soda, she would have been breaking the contest rules. Why is it important to obey rules? Can you find a story in the newspaper that is about someone who broke a rule? See if you can find one and summarize it by describing the broken rule and what happened when it was broken.

Writing Prompt:

Why do you think people were so quick to believe that Sarah was cheating? She wins every year. Do you think that makes people suspicious of her? Why? Write about what you think the reasons might be that people were so quick to believe that Sarah cheated.

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

Mrs rogers gives Sarah her first seed She swishes it around in her mouth. After one minite, she spits it through the air. It lands on the far ege of the blue trap. The crowd cheers

Learning standards:

understanding rules and laws, summarizing

Chapter Eight: Take Me out to the Ball Game**Summary:**

Robyn announces that Sarah is the winner of the seed-spitting contest because the seed that went the farthest had no teeth marks and Henry had chewed his seed. Then there is chaos at the baseball game when someone keeps disrupting the game by shouting things.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

This chapter is about the baseball game. Baseball has been called the “National Pastime.” What do your students think that means?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

proclaim
champion
emergency

Bonus:

This chapter includes several compound words – watermelon, baseball, ponytail, outfield, anything. Introduce the concept of compound words (two words joined together to form a new word). Ask students to find and identify and compound words in this chapter.

Comprehension Check:

1. How did Robyn identify the winner of the seed-spitting contest?
She knew one seed had been chewed. She also knew Henry had chewed on his seed. Putting the two observations together, she concluded Sarah was the winner.
2. Why does Roxanne say that Robyn must come to the baseball field?
There’s an emergency at the baseball field.
3. What went wrong at the baseball game?
During the second inning, a practical joker started mocking the umpire.
4. Why does Robyn let J.P. be in charge of the baseball story?
Robyn’s mom says that a good reporter doesn’t always have to be in charge.

Newspaper Activity:

Robyn spotted the teeth marks on the seed when no one else did. That may be because she is a reporter and reporters must be very observant. What other attributes might a good reporter have? Find a news story in your newspaper that was written by a local reporter whom you think is a good writer. See if you can figure out what questions he or she might have asked in researching the story.

Writing Prompt:

Write a journal entry about a time you played a sport or watched a sport. Explain what it is about that sport that you enjoyed.

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

The crowd does not seem happy. The ump holds his hands up to quiet the audience. I'm sorry," he says "But this has been going on for three innings. We can't continue the game under these condisions.

Learning standards:

journal writing, identifying attributes, generating questions

Chapter Nine: Loud and Proud

Summary:

Robyn thinks she spots the joker at the baseball game. It is a bird. She goes to find the neighborhood bird expert, Mr. Harrison, to ask if this is possible. Mr. Harrison explains that a Northern Mockingbird is able to mimic what people are saying and that is what is happening. Then the game continues. Robyn realizes that Roxanne likes J.P. Robyn then goes to interview Sarah.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

The person who is yelling during the game is causing a great disruption. Why do your students think that someone would want to cause that kind of trouble?

Vocabulary Words or Phrases:

Have the students find each word in the chapter and define it in context. They should look up any unfamiliar word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

- concession
- bleachers
- expert
- peering
- mocks
- convince

Comprehension Check:

1. How does Robyn get the crowd to quiet down?
She asked Roxanne to do it. Roxanne yells “QUIET” and the crowd stops talking.
2. Where does Robyn think the voice is coming from?
She sees a bird in a tree and she thinks it’s calling out words.
3. Why does Robyn need to speak to Mr. Harrison?
He is an expert on birds and will know if this bird could be talking.
4. What does Mr. Harrison say?
Mr. Harrison says that the Northern Mockingbird mimics the sound of other animals or even people. He says the bird is likely “mocking” the umpire and copying what he is saying.

Bonus:

Have students go online to do some research to find out about the Northern Mockingbird. Have students write reports about this animal.

Newspaper Activity:

The bird is acting somewhat like a person in that it is talking. Several animals seen in comic strips have some of the characteristics of people. Choose one of those animals and write about how it compares to you.

Writing Prompt:

If your classroom had a mascot pet, what animal would you want it to be? What animal would fit in the best? Write a paragraph about your choice and why you picked it.

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

I pull out my notebook Sarah hands me an enormis peace of watermelon. I take a huge bite of it Its so sweet and juisy. It was definitely worth the wait. During my interview with Sarah I eat three more pieces of watermelon

Learning standards:

writing to inform or persuade, conducting online research

Chapter Ten: The Robyn Report

Summary:

This chapter is *The Robyn Report* newspaper.

Getting Ready to Read/Predicting:

Ask students to predict what the headlines about the various events might be. Then have each student pick one event that s/he read about in the story and to write a news-style article about it. This issue of *The Robyn Report* covers the food fight and the seed-spitting

contest interview. If your students write about either of those, compare their stories to the ones in *The Robyn Report*.

Newspaper Activities

Have students choose one of the stories and then find an article in the newspaper that is most like it. They should write a comparison of the two stories.

Students can compare how *The Robyn Report* serves the needs of its neighborhood with how your local newspaper serves its community. Why do we need newspapers? What is their value in society?

Daily Edit:

Here is a paragraph from this story that is not punctuated or punctuated incorrectly. There may also be spelling errors. Have your students copy it and correct it as needed. They can self-check by looking at the printed copy in the newspaper.

sarah has been spitting watermelon seeds since she was 3 years old It all started when she ate her first piece of watermelon.

it was a hot sumer day, and we were eating watermelon in our backyard,” sarah says. “That’s when I bit into something hard

Learning standards:

understanding the role of the press in society, writing to persuade

