

A Curriculum Guide to

Belly Up and Poached

By Stuart Gibbs

About *Belly Up*

Twelve-year-old Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt Fitzroy has murder on his hands and trouble on his tail. He believes that Henry, the hippopotamus at the brand-new FunJungle, has been murdered. The zoo’s top brass claim the hippo went belly up the natural way, but Teddy and his feisty friend Summer McCracken have other ideas. Could the culprit be FunJungle’s animal-hating head of operations? Or is it FunJungle’s owner—Summer’s dad—a man who is much more concerned about money than animal welfare? The deeper Teddy and Summer dig, the more danger they’re in—because when it comes to hippo homicide, the truth can’t be caged!

About *Poached*

Kazoo the koala is Missing! And Teddy Fitzroy is the primary suspect. The only way Teddy can clear his name is to crack the case and bring Kazoo home to FunJungle, where he belongs, all while steering clear of Vance the bully. Otherwise, Teddy will be shipped off to juvie as a convicted koala-napper.

Curriculum Connections: Reading, Writing, and Researching

Prereading Activity

The activities below align with the following Common Core Standards: (RL.4.2) (RL.6.2) (SL.4 – 6.1, 2, 3)

As a prereading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

<i>Before Reading</i>	<i>After Reading</i>	<i>Statements</i>
		Adults always know the right way to approach a problem.
		All mysteries are worth solving.
		The best way to deal with a bully is to fight back.
		When in danger, it is best to play it safe rather than take a risk.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to

agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Belly Up and Poached through Writing and Research

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Belly Up* and/or *Poached* as reflective writing prompts, or alternatively they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

The discussion questions below align with the following Common Core Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3, 7, 9) (RL.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9) (RL.6.1, 2, 3) (SL.6.1, 2, 3) (W.4 – 6.4)

1. In *Belly Up*, the novel opens with Teddy stating, “I’d just been busted for giving chimpanzees water balloons when I first heard something was wrong at Hippo River.” From this first introduction of Teddy, what can readers infer about him? Did you find those inferences about him to be accurate as you got to know him better throughout the course of *Belly Up* and *Poached*?

2. Consider the novels’ titles: In what ways do they capture the themes of the book?

3. In *Belly Up*, Summer helps Teddy understand that Henry’s death from peritonitis was calculated, and that his killer is most likely someone who is an employee of the park. Why is Summer’s insight so important? What does the park stand to lose from the death of Henry, who serves as the mascot of FunJungle?

4. Describe Teddy. What makes him a dynamic character? Is he the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?

5. Because of his mother’s work at FunJungle, Teddy gets to reside at the zoo/park. Do you have a favorite theme park or zoo? Imagine what it would be like living there. What would be the greatest benefits to such an experience? What would be the biggest challenges? Do you feel that Teddy takes advantage of this unusual situation?

6. While explaining that her life in the limelight isn’t as glamorous as one might expect, Summer tells Teddy, “You try to do something normal, like go to dinner or a movie or even just get an ice cream—and the next thing you know, there’s a thousand lights flashing in your face and all these greasy guys are shoving up against you, calling you names . . . it’s the worst thing ever.” Do you think Summer’s life is as bad as she paints it? Why or why not? How does Teddy help her understand that her life isn’t as awful as she might think it is?

7. In *Poached*, Teddy’s nemeses are Vance Jessup and TimJim. What do these three boys have in common? In your opinion, why do they act the way they do?

8. In *Poached*, what are the most impressive obstacles Teddy overcomes? Which of these hurdles did you like best? Why?

9. Describe Summer. In your opinion, is she a good friend to Teddy? Why or why not? How does her experience as the daughter of a business tycoon help her better understand the operations of FunJungle?
10. In your opinion, what is the appropriate way to deal with a bully like Vance Jessup? In what ways does Teddy get the better of him? Do you think Teddy is right to retaliate the way he does?
11. Think about the questions Summer constantly asks Teddy about the mysteries they work to solve. How does her questioning shape how Teddy considers the clues and evidence before him? For this reason, do you find that their investigative partnership works? Why or why not?
12. Large Marge tells Teddy, “Right now, you’re the only person I see making trouble.” In your opinion, why does Large Marge always seem so determined to catch Teddy misbehaving or why does she always seem to desire to get the best of Teddy? Do you think she is at all justified in her actions? Why or why not?
13. Though Teddy is often reprimanded for being a prankster and troublemaker, with the help of Summer he is also the person who helps solve the mysteries that plague FunJungle. What can readers infer about Teddy’s motivations?
14. What important lessons about the care of animals can be learned from Kristi Sullivan’s neglect of Kazoo the koala?
15. For what reasons do you think Teddy feels connected to Summer? Why do you believe she seeks out his friendship? Consider the evolution of their friendship: How would you characterize the relationship between the two of them, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
16. Consider the unusual cast of secondary characters: Who did you like the most? The least? For what reason? Of all of the characters, who did you feel was most similar to you, due to his/her personality or experiences?
17. *Belly Up* and *Poached* are told in first person: How would the story be different if another character (besides Teddy) were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse? Why?
18. What was your earliest impression of Kristi Sullivan? What did you think of her being moved into public relations from animal keeping? In your opinion, has FunJungle made the right decision in keeping her as an employee after the Kazoo disaster? Why or why not?
19. Using the phrase “These stories are about . . . ,” supply five words to describe *Belly Up* and *Poached*. Explain your choices.
20. As each of the novels closes, Teddy has solved a number of important mysteries. Predict what Teddy will have to do to come to the aid of FunJungle in the next adventure of Teddy Fitzroy.

Extended Writing and Research Prompts

The activities below align with the following Common Core Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3) (RL.5.1, 2, 4) (RL.6.1, 2) (W.4 – 6.4)

1. Though FunJungle has its fair share of mishaps, it has also been able to recruit specialists, like Teddy’s mother, from around the world to work with and care for their animals. Using library resources and the Internet, have students research a park or sanctuary dedicated to working with and caring for specific types of creatures. Be sure to learn the following:

- Who established the park and why was it founded?
- What is the park’s mission?
- How is it supported and by whom?
- What other animals are cared for (if any)?
- What can individuals do to help support this facility?

After gathering this information, have them create a visual presentation that illustrates their findings.

2. Throughout *Belly Up* and *Poached*, animals from locations around the world are referenced and highlighted. Using the novels as inspiration, use textual descriptions of the creatures to select one particular animal to research. Place students in pairs and have them role-play as news reporters giving a report on their selected animal. To enrich the activity, record the “report” and allow students to use props and costumes for their news report.

3. *Belly Up* and *Poached* focus on Teddy’s relationships with his family, friends, and other acquaintances at FunJungle. Consider your most special relationships. What makes these individuals so important? Compose a personal journal entry where you share their thoughts, and be sure to answer the following questions:

- Who are the individuals who mean the most to you?
- Why is that particular relationship so special?
- What’s the greatest sacrifice you’ve made for the people you love?
- In what ways have the changes you’ve experienced in your life affected those to whom you are closest?

To culminate, ask for volunteers to share their writing with the class.

4. Throughout the course of the novels, readers are offered great insight about Teddy’s point of view, based on the events of *Belly Up* and *Poached*. Assume the role of one of the secondary characters from *Belly Up* and *Poached*, and draft a diary entry detailing what you experienced and witnessed. To prepare, create an outline using the five W’s (who, what, when, where, and why). Remember to write in first person and give special attention to sensory imagery (what you saw, smelled, heard, etc.)

5. Many of the characters in *Belly Up* and *Poached* are not as they appear. Consider the importance of appearances and the need for disguising one’s self: What might be a rationale to do so? What are the ramifications and consequences of such a choice? Select one character from the novel and write a short analysis of his/her choice to use a disguise.

Belly Up and Poached through Literary Elements Analysis

Use the following activities to allow students to show their understanding of various literary elements in *Belly Up* and *Poached*.

The activities below align with the following Common Core Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9) (RL.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9) (RL.6.1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9)

Setting: Why is the FunJungle location so important? Using the descriptions provided in each of the books, illustrate the four places within the park you believe to be most important to the story. In addition to the illustrations, include a short explanation of the significance of each, and why you believe it is important.

Considering Character: The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character in *Belly Up* and *Poached* by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint, Prezi, or Movie Maker.

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)

I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)

I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)

I see (an imaginary sight the character might see)

I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (about something that really bothers the character)

I cry (about something that makes the character very sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)

I say (something that the character believes in)

I dream (something the character might actually dream about)

I try (something the character really makes an effort about)

I hope (something the character actually hopes for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

BIOPOEM:

Line 1: First name

Line 2: Three traits that describe the character

Line 3: Relative of _____

Line 4: Lover of _____ (three things)

Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)

Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)
Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)
Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)
Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three things)
Line 10: Resident of _____
Line 11: Last name _____

Advice Column: Ask students to describe one of the problems faced by a character in *Belly Up* and *Poached* and write advice to him/her. Students may choose to be serious or humorous. Use the letter format common to newspaper advice columns, where the person with the problem writes for advice and the advisor writes back. Often the person seeking advice “disguises” his or her name with a descriptive name associated with the problem.

Fortune Cookies: Have students imagine they are dining with three characters from *Belly Up* and *Poached*. Have them create fortune-cookie statements for each character, making sure they tell you which character received the fortune and why it is fitting.

Gift Giving: Have students select five or more gifts that would be perfect to give to one of the characters in *Belly Up* and *Poached*. While these gifts can be tangible or intangible, they should be things that he/she would really want or need. Be sure that for each gift, an explanation for the gift and why it is appropriate is attached.

If These Walls Could Talk: Ask students to create a conversation between one of the characters in *Belly Up* and *Poached* and some intangible thing (justice, love, goodness, greed, etc.) or his/her conscience. Have them script the conversation for dialogue, making sure they use appropriate punctuation.

Character Report Card: Ask students to examine the ethical nature of a character’s actions and choices in *Belly Up* and *Poached*. Have them set up a “report card,” using a chart, and include the following eight categories: respect, responsibility, cooperation, caring, integrity, self-control, honesty, and effort. In addition, include a teacher’s comments section. In each category, give the character a letter grade that you believe he/she deserves based on actions and choices made in the book. In the comments, use two specific pieces of evidence from the novel to explain/support the grade.

Character Analysis T-shirt: Select a favorite character from *Belly Up* and *Poached* and create a character analysis T-shirt. Identify the literary elements used by the author to describe the character, and then create a visual representation of the character’s traits. The front of the shirt must include the book title, author’s name, and the character’s name, picture, and description. The right sleeve must list the character’s strength, and the left sleeve should list the character’s weaknesses. List internal and external conflicts, figurative language, and the story’s climax on the back of the T-shirt.

Character Trait Silhouette: Working with others, create a character trait silhouette about your favorite or least favorite character in *Belly Up* and/or *Poached*. Begin by tracing an appropriately sized member of the group onto butcher paper. The silhouette must be life-size.

The traced silhouette should reflect physical traits of the character, so modify as you draw. Next, cut out the silhouette and include ten values from your list. These need to be the most important traits of your character. For each trait, a quote that supports the description needs to be included. Inside the silhouette, include symbols which represent your character's interests, personality, beliefs, skills, or profession.

Character “To Do” List: Remind students that, like us, literary characters have tasks they need to complete. Select a character of their choice from *Belly Up* and/or *Poached*. Ask students to create a list of the most important tasks at hand for that character with explanations as to why those tasks are so necessary.

Visualize the Scene: In small groups, have students select a favorite scene from *Belly Up* and/or *Poached* and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic novel for that scene. Using a digital comic strip creator (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/> or <http://infinitemic.com/> for example), have students begin by using the strips to create storyboards for their scene. Have students select original art, images, and graphics. Alternatively, students could assume the roles of two of the characters, with each one's personality and voice, and have them interact with each other by creating an extension of a scene from one of the novels. As part of the evaluation component, consider panel size and number of panels, transitions and layouts, artwork, writing, and lettering.

Belly Up and/or Poached Readers Theater Activity

The activities below align with the following Common Core Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3, 7, 9) (RL.5.1, 2, 4, 7, 9) (RL.6.1, 2, 3)

For Teddy, FunJungle is both home and the center of his adventures where mysteries unfold. Using the following directions, have students demonstrate an understanding of text structure by retelling and sequencing a scene from *Belly Up* and/or *Poached*.

Directions

1. Read *Belly Up* and/or *Poached* with the class. After reading the novel, have students complete a story-analysis graphic organizer or an SWBS chart as a way to make observations about the characters, setting, conflict, and plot.
2. To enhance understanding, take a well-known story (perhaps a fairy tale) and model writing a Readers Theater script as a whole class activity. After discussing dialogue and performance, divide the class into small groups that will create an original script using a chapter from *Belly Up* and/or *Poached* book as inspiration.
3. Next, allow students ample time to practice, and be sure to conference with each group to answer or clarify any questions they may have.
4. Finally, it's show time! Allow students to create costumes, props, and sets for the final Readers Theater performance. Groups will perform for other teams of students. For additional fun, consider filming each performance to share with the whole class.

Guide written in 2013 by Rose Brock, a teacher, school librarian, and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

This guide, written in alignment with the Common Core Standards (www.corestandards.org) has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.