

# • Meet the Author •

Grades  
K-2, 3-5

## Jon Scieszka

Nick Glass of TeachingBooks.net interviewed Jon Scieszka from his Brooklyn, New York, home.



Photo courtesy of Penguin Young Readers Group.

**You taught in an elementary school for many years before you started writing books for children. How does your teaching background play a role in your career as a writer?**

**JS:** I got into teaching mostly because of my dad. My dad was an elementary school principal for thirty years in Flint, Michigan. Seeing how he talked to kids made an impression on me. He treated kids like they were real people, and I always kept that with me. I think all the stuff that's in my books really came out of having been with kids and having been a teacher. There's no experience that's equivalent. You can have kids of your own or you can go to a classroom, but man, having lived with a class for a whole academic year ...

**What about working with children influenced your writing the most?**

**JS:** There's a kind of a natural storytelling that you do when you're in a classroom with kids. Students are so funny. They're so smart. I mean, they may not have all the same skills of language and be able to explain things like an adult, but what a passionate audience! I got the experience of knowing what an audience is like when reading a picture book text aloud. I learned by reading *Frog & Toad* and James Marshall's *George & Martha* and *The Stupids* to a group of kids and then improvising on my own. I was always looking for books that would really get kids jazzed to become readers. I found that was much easier than actually telling them reading was good for them. If I read the beginning of *The Phantom Tollbooth* or *The Hoboken Chicken Emergency* or just part of *George & Martha*, they would say, "Oh, we've got to find out what happens next, we want to read some more of these!" That really inspired me. I took off a year from teaching to try to write stuff.

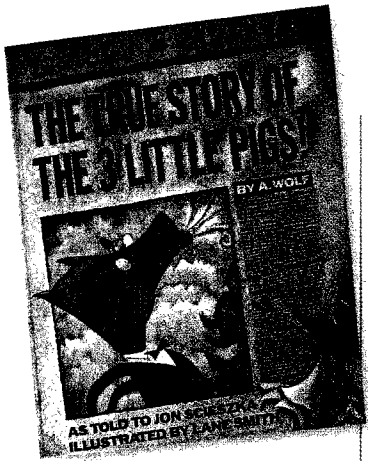
**What was your inspiration for creating fractured fairy tales?**

**JS:** With my second graders, I would do writing projects where we goofed around with stories that we knew and retold them. I always thought fractured fairy

tales were so much fun, even as a kid when I discovered them in a roundabout kind of way. I was first exposed to them through *Mad Magazine* and *Rocky & Bullwinkle*. I sort of knew the "Three Little Pigs" and maybe "Cinderella." Then I came to find out that there was another story that went before this, and I think learning of these variations just twisted my brain around and I've remained that way ever since. That's really where my books like the *True Story of the Three Little Pigs* came from, and all the *Stinky Cheese* stories, which took me forever to get published because people were just too freaked out by them.

**Can you share how your first book, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, came to be published?**

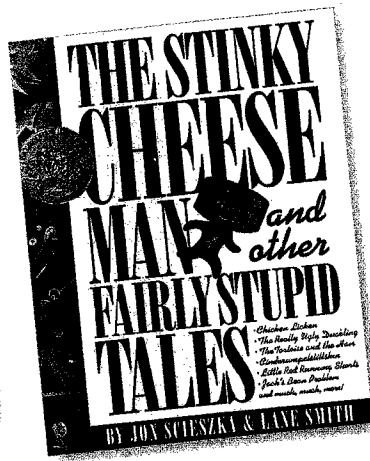
**JS:** Let's take it bit by bit. *The True Story of Three Little Pigs* was originally called *A Wolf's Tale*, which I thought was a really funny title. Thank goodness my editor talked me out of that, because *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* is a much better kind of tabloid headline. I was working as a painter to make money. I painted this guy's law office down on Wall Street and noticed he had an extra office, so I asked him if I could use it for a quiet place to write. He said, "Yeah, sure, nobody's in



there." I would commute to this office, which is pretty funny that *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* was written in a Wall Street law office.

**What was it like talking to publishers about your first manuscript, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*?**

**JS:** Lane Smith and I had a difficult time finding a publisher who understood the humor and play in *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Publishers thought the story was too sophisticated or the artwork was too sophisticated or that both things were just too weird and kids wouldn't understand it. I think that's what our editor at Penguin initially saw, too. Lane had come in just showing his artwork, and the editor said, "I really think your stuff is funny, kind of weird and quirky, but we don't have anything for you right now." Lane said, "By the way, I also have this story my friend Jon wrote," and I'm sure she probably thought, "Oh, great, I'm sure that's great." However, she read it right there and kept an open enough mind to say, "I've never seen anything like this; it's kind of funny." That was her reaction. I love that she just went with her gut feeling of "This is kind of funny ... I think kids would think it was funny."



**After *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, came *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*.**

**JS:** *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* was similar in that those were stories I had written before I had published. Lane and I spoke at schools a little bit, and the only book we had was *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. After we had read it like fifty-eight times, I decided to read the *Stinky* stories, too. *Stinky* was a book that got rejected a lot of places because people thought that it was too crazy. It got a violent reaction from people because they sincerely thought that it was too much for kids—to have, for example, the really ugly duckling grow up to be a really ugly duck. Fortunately, I had the benefit of having been a homeroom teacher to realize that kids are tough and funny. They're not just shrinking little violets. They don't have to have everything pre-digested for them. So with *Stinky* I tried to break every rule I possibly could.

**Some of the rule breaking in *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* involves play on words. How does this change of convention appeal to young readers?**

**JS:** Part of word play definitely comes from being around first, second, and third graders. Those kids are just learning about the rules, and there's nothing they think is funnier than twisting the rules. In fact, that might be the prescription for all the stuff I do. It's like, "Break the rules so you can see what they are." I think *Frog Prince* is another good example of messing around with fairy tales because it has four or five fairy tales that are interwoven, and kids can pick apart the different elements that they know from that tale.

**There are elements in the layout of *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* that defy publishing norms. How did you come to make those decisions?**

**JS:** That was another unusual piece of how Lane and I got to collaborate and work. Since we are friends, we hang out all the time. I'd stop by his studio and see what he was doing. We would come up with things while we were putting all those little story pieces together. I very consciously plotted what would get messed up, like would it be the narrator is missing? Would it be that the book has no ending? Would it be that it has no beginning? Maybe *Stinky* would start from the back and go forward. To us, all of this was another opportunity to add something funny in the book. The other person collaborating with us was Lane's wife, Molly, who is a book designer. In fact, it was Molly who decided on the back where the red hen is just going "blah, blah, blah, blah, blah" because she didn't have any text

## Meet the Author

to fill in what the red hen was going to say. When I saw that, I just said, "Oh, that's perfect." And the ISBN gag too—that was Molly's idea. Then Lane and I latched onto the idea to alter the book format itself. The end papers are not at the end of the book. The title page is upside down. If we could have, I think we would have put the whole cover upside down, but our editor talked us out of that, which was probably a good idea.

### **Was it challenging to pattern *Squids Will Be Squids*, a book of fables, after your fairy tale books?**

**JS:** *Squids Will Be Squids* is goofing on *Aesop's Fables*. I think even when I was writing *Squids Will Be Squids*, I hadn't realized how complicated it is. I just took the form of the fable and had animals or pieces of toast and Froot Loops be characters and then included a moral. But I've had kids try to write fables and they usually don't turn out very well because they're so hard to do. This process is not unlike how a second grader can get the idea of, "Oh, yeah, a fairy tale told by somebody else in the story, I can do that."

### ***Squids Will Be Squids* plays with a different kind of humor. How have readers responded to that humor?**

**JS:** It's a kind of particular, weird humor. Some of the jokes are almost non sequiturs. Monica Edinger, a teacher in New York, wrote an article about children's perception of humor in the books *Arlene Sardine* (by Chris Raschka) and *Squids Will Be Squids*. She explored how some

kids don't get certain humor. It was amazing because she had classes of kids who would just rave about *Squids* or *Arlene*, and then other whole classes who just didn't get it or didn't think it was funny. She came to this great conclusion that different stuff is funny to different people.

### **Twisting familiar forms of stories appears to be a talent of yours. How did you apply this technique to the subject of mathematics with *Math Curse*?**

**JS:** With *Math Curse*, I took all the elements of mathematics and messed with each one. Because I taught math for the ten years I was a school teacher, I included a little of everything from first grade through eighth grade. The idea with *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* was to use all the different elements of fairy tales and book making and kind of goof on that. I took *Math Curse* as a chance to play with fractions, word problems—you name it: division, pi, money problems ... there's always got to be a money problem.

### **How did you incorporate humor into a book about math, which is typically a serious subject?**

**JS:** *Math Curse* is a book that took me a long time to write because I'd been trying to think of a funny way to write a math book for years. Every time I'd mention it, my editor would be very scared because she's a bit math-phobic. She just didn't see how it could be funny. But I really love math. I think a lot of people don't find math particularly funny, and most kids

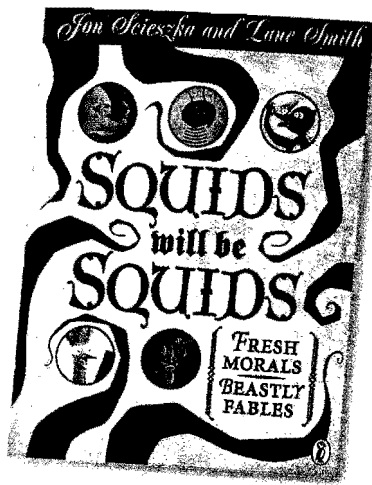
have been tortured by those awful word problems ... they have 20% of the gross national product of ... do they have enough money to buy a dress at 10% off. I thought, "What if a kid just ran into those word problems everywhere in a day?" I also used the bus problem—there'd be kids already on the bus and how many more kids get on at the next stop, how many more kids get on at the next stop, etc. Then I just incorporated that with my favorite old jokes. That's the classic bus driver joke where you describe the thing in length and then ask the punch line, "What is the bus driver's name?"

### **What types of student responses have you seen to *Math Curse*?**

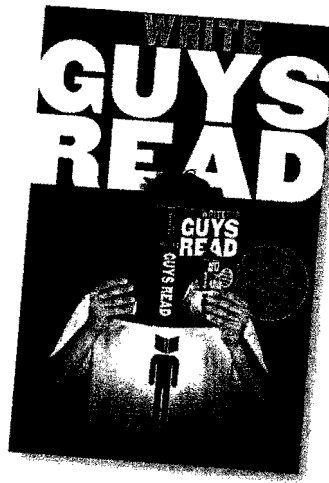
**JS:** Right after *Math Curse* was finished, kids started writing to me and asking, "Where's *Science Curse*?" because it ends with kind of a cliffhanger of the poor narrator going into science class and then the teacher saying the same thing that started the *Math Curse*. I always like to do something unexpected so it took another five, six years or so, but then it hit me one day. It was like, "Oh, it could be poems, science poems, how weird would that be?" So I just took that opportunity to mash up both science and poetry and put the two together to create *Science Verse*.

### **How did you make the switch to chapter books with *The Time Warp Trio* series?**

**JS:** *The Time Warp Trio* books are decidedly different. With



those, I was specifically trying to reach that younger audience who just started reading chapter books. I saw so many kids when I was teaching second and third grade who just couldn't find books that kept them interested in reading. Another big piece missing were the boys who were kind of looking for rowdy, funny stories. I've been interested in history since I was a kid, and I thought, "What if three random kids in my third, fourth grade class could go anywhere in time and then run into all these great historical characters? And what if they could do that in really skinny books with short chapters and cliffhanger endings that could then help early readers?" I wrote up the first two and Lane illustrated them. Then they just took on a life of their own, so I kept doing another one and another one. At the time even our publisher thought it was weird that somebody as good as Lane was working on the covers and the interior artwork. I said, "No, it's got to look cool, otherwise kids won't like it." I ended up talking Lane into about eight of them, and then we found together Adam McCauley, who's another great illustrator, to do the second eight.



### **Did your desire to reach beginning readers inspire your initiative with Guys Read?**

**JS:** Guys Read came out of my experience of being a teacher and being a parent. I have a daughter and a son—a daughter who's a crazy reader and a son who is not. Growing up with five brothers, I saw all different kinds of readers who were guys. In school, I saw boys falling out of reading, or not getting engaged in reading. It was probably the year 2000 when I first started the program. I started to look around for any kind of research that was being done on reading and gender and if there was a connection. Teachers and parents would say, "Oh, yeah, the boys struggle. They're just not doing as well." As I looked into the research, I found out that boys were doing worse than the girls and realized that this had been going on for twenty-five years.

### **How have you been able to spread this message to help support Guys Read?**

**JS:** The other piece that really made Guys Read possible was the computer world and the technology that's available now online. I realized I couldn't go to every school and talk about this. I realized I could make a

Web site and have the information there for people to get a conversation started about what's going on with boys and reading. Second, I wanted to give people some practical ways to really help boys read—most of which is just to let them read stuff they like to read. The Web site collected a bunch of recommendations from boys about books they like. Now it's much easier because boys can say, "Here's a book some more guys like, I might like that too." I was just thrilled to see the recommendations because they're everything. They range from the kind of goofy, almost predictable, books like *Captain Underpants* to some really sophisticated stuff, like Philip Pullman or Garth Nix. I recommend that people think of reading as a much broader activity and include things like nonfiction, humor, and science fiction.

### **Guys Write for Guys Read, the anthology you published with the help of a few dozen fantastic male writers and illustrators of books for children and teens, features recommendations for male readers. What was it like to compile these entries?**

**JS:** I enjoyed asking a hundred different guys to contribute to the anthology. I asked people I knew, and authors whose books had been recommended, to write about what it's like being a guy. I also asked illustrators to provide an illustration from when he had been a young guy. It was cool to have entries from Stephen King and Matt Groening of "The Simpsons."

### **What was your motivation for creating the multi-format book program *Trucktown*?**

**JS:** *Trucktown* was an idea that came to me through the Guys Read stuff that was I doing—trying to get boys motivated to be readers. I started working with younger and younger kids and I thought, “Wouldn’t it be cool if just as kids start reading, just as they come into looking at books, to have something that would really motivate them?” Trucks were the thing that naturally came to mind because I come from a family of five brothers. We were six boys all together, no girls, and we were all truck crazy. My dad used to take us out to look at construction sites, and we’d stand there for hours watching trucks work. I thought, “Trucks—it could be a whole world of trucks.” I’ve seen how kids are nuts about something like the *Thomas the Tank Engine* stories, so I became inspired to create great stories with really spectacular artwork.

### **How did examining things from a child’s perspective influence your collaboration with Lane Smith on *Seen Art*?**

**JS:** *Seen Art*? was a book that started in a very funny way. I got a call from the Museum of Modern Art. It was from a woman who said, “I don’t know if you remember me, Mr. Scieszka, but I used to be in your second grade class.” It was one of my original second grade students! She was working in the educational arm of the Museum

of Modern Art and had been in a meeting where they were talking about how they would love to have more real kids’ book writers and illustrators do something at the museum. The director was saying, “I especially like that Lane Smith and Jon Scieszka ... I can’t even say his name, whoever that guy is.” And this young woman said, “That’s Jon Scieszka, he used to be my second grade teacher.” Lane and I got to walk through the building, look through their collections, and try to imagine how we would connect this world with kids. I had the best time and Lane and I goofed around with everything and thought, “Wow, we have all these paintings and sculptures to play with, how would a kid see these?”

### **What do you do when you get stuck?**

**JS:** I’m usually working on so many different projects that I’ve got things all over the place. If I run into a bit of a problem with one project, I’ll just go do something else for awhile or work on a different project.

### **What do you like to tell students?**

**JS:** I say, “Brush your teeth and do what your mom says.” I tell them that writing is mostly about the real hard work of sitting down and writing your ideas on paper. That’s probably even good for adults to know. The hardest piece about writing is actually sitting down and doing it. If you can do that, you’re more than halfway there.

### **What do you like to tell teachers?**

**JS:** I like to tell teachers to be quiet. The best day I ever had teaching was a day I had laryngitis. I slowly lost my voice in the morning and by the time I was teaching afternoon math classes, it was mostly in pantomime. It was mostly about me getting out of the way and letting kids do the learning. It wasn’t me lecturing and telling them what to do. I was just there helping out. When they needed me they would come up and look at me, but more often they’d just say, “Ah, he can’t say anything, we’ll just do it on our own.” I think every teacher has had that great moment where the class just took off and was just flying without them. That’s what you like to see. It’s like that moment you let go of your kids on the bike without training wheels, and the class just takes off.

Jon Scieszka’s bibliography is at [www.jsworldwide.com/yeah\\_he\\_wrote\\_em.html](http://www.jsworldwide.com/yeah_he_wrote_em.html).

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For more information about Jon Scieszka, go to [jsworldwide.com](http://jsworldwide.com). [www.TeachingBooks.net](http://www.TeachingBooks.net) produces comprehensive author programs that enable every school and library to virtually host favorite authors and illustrators of books for children and teens. Programs include original five-minute movies filmed in their studios, in-depth written interviews, and relevant links around the Web. For more information, contact Nick Glass, Founder, at [nick@teachingbooks.net](mailto:nick@teachingbooks.net).



# • Author Extensions •

by | Jennifer Ward

Grades  
2-5

## Jon Scieszka

Jon Scieszka's name has become instantly synonymous with wildly creative humor and an outlandish imagination. Pronouncing his name, however, is not so automatic. "Scieszka" rhymes with "fresca." It is a Polish word that translates to "path." (You can hear him say his name at [teachingbooks.net/say/Scieszka](http://teachingbooks.net/say/Scieszka).)

Read on for lessons and activities for the following Jon Scieszka books:

- *The Frog Prince Continued* illustrated by Steve Johnson. Penguin, 1991.
- *Math Curse* illustrated by Lane Smith. Viking, 2007.
- *Baloney (Henry P)* illustrated by Lane Smith. Viking, 2001.
- *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* illustrated by Lane Smith. Dutton, 1995.

## The Frog Prince Continued

Everyone knows the classic fairy tale, *The Frog Prince*. But do you know the story of the princess and her frog prince after their happily ever after ending? In Jon Scieszka's *The Frog Prince Continued*, readers are offered a behind-the-scenes hilarious peek at one not-so-perfect prince and princess couple.



### Language Arts Extension

**Fun with Fairy Tales.** Create a KWL Chart with students. Using a large piece of butcher paper, create a chart titled "Fairy Tales."

Label the columns with:

K = What  
We Know

W = What We  
Want to Learn

L = What  
We Learned

Ask students to think about what they know about traditional fairy tales. Which traditional fairy tales are they familiar with? (*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *The Frog Prince*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Hansel & Gretel* ...)

Ask students what common elements might they find in a fairy tale (A castle, a princess, a prince, a witch, a problem or conflict, a dragon, a happy ending, fantasy elements ...)

Fill in the "K" portion of the chart with student responses.

Read the traditional version of *The Frog Prince* to students. Following a traditional reading of *The Frog Prince*, show students the cover of Jon Scieszka's *The Frog Prince Continued*.

Complete the "W" portion of the chart by asking students:

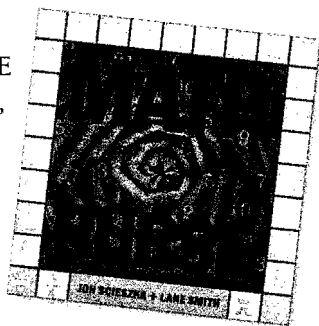
- Looking at the cover and reading the title, what do we predict this book is about?
- What do we want to learn about this book? (Do the prince and princess live happily ever after? What is their life like together? Do they live in a castle? Do they have a conflict or problem?)
- Solicit curiosity and imagination from students.

Read *The Frog Prince Continued*. After reading the story with students, discuss the setting, plot, and characters while completing the "L" portion of the chart: "What We Learned."

Address questions from the "W" portion of the chart as you guide students in responding to the "L" portion of the chart. Address, "What did we learn about the fractured fairy tale *The Frog Prince Continued* based on our predictions?"

### Math Curse

Oh no! It's here, it's there, it's EVERYWHERE ... Math! In *Math Curse*, a student learns that you can look at anything in life and turn it into a math sentence. Could this be a curse? Or is this just plain mathematical fun?



#### Language Arts Extensions

**Pre-reading Predictions.** Show students the cover of *Math Curse*. After reading the title and looking at the cover, allow students to predict what the book might be about.

You will do several readings of *Math Curse* for the following activities. Initially, read the story all the way through. Were student predictions about the story's plot on target? Discuss and compare student predictions to the book's outcome.

**Compound Calculations.** *Math Curse* shows how even the English language can become a math word problem. When two words are added together, they can create a new word! For example, mail + box = mailbox and lip + stick = lipstick.

Explain to students that when two words are placed together to create a new word, the new word is a "compound word."

Have students brainstorm a list of compound words. To help get them started, provide the first word for each new compound word:

- sand + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
(examples: box, paper, man...)
- thumb + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
(examples: print, tack...)
- butter + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_  
(examples: fly, cup...)

Have students complete the following:

- dog + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_
- ice + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Have students create and write their own compound math sentences. Explain that the above math sentences are "addition sentences."

Can the above math sentences be reversed and turned into "subtraction sentences"? Allow students to explore creating subtraction sentences. Provide students with an opportunity to illustrate the math sentences they create with pictures.

#### Math Extensions

**Manic for Math.** After reading *Math Curse* to students, explain to students that Mrs. Fibonacci, the teacher in the book, is correct. Almost everything can be looked at as a math problem.

Go back to the book and explore the daily life math problems the main character encounters. The first problem deals with waking up at 7:15 a.m. and the time it takes to get ready for school when the bus departs at 8:00 a.m.

- Will she make the bus on time?
- How many shirts are in her closet, all together?

Explore the problems posed as the main character eats breakfast. Some are puzzles. Some are silly. Which are which? Encourage students to differentiate.

**Multiplication Made Marvelous.** There are twenty-four students in the main character's class. They are arranged in four rows with six desks per row. Distribute a piece of paper to each student. Ask them to draw four lines across their paper, creating five equal, horizontal sections.

Allow students to draw an example of how the main character's class desks are arranged. After they have drawn four rows, have them draw six desks per row. Assure them that simple shapes will suffice as desks. Once they finish drawing the desks, have them count the total.

Demonstrate how this arrangement works as a "multiplication sentence."

- 4 rows x 6 desks = 24 students.  $4 \times 6 = 24$
- Demonstrate how this sentence can be reversed:
- 6 desks x 4 rows = 24 students.  $6 \times 4 = 24$

**Math Madness.** Just for fun, work with students to solve the following mathematical problems presented in *Math Curse*:

- How many minutes in a year?
- How many inches in a foot?
- How many feet in a yard?



Then, solve this money problem posed in the book:

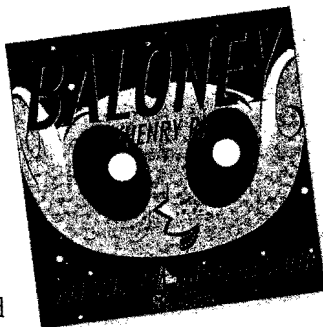
- George Washington is on both the quarter and the \$1 bill. Abraham Lincoln is on both the penny and the \$5 bill. Which is true?
    - a) 1 Washington equals 25 Lincolns
    - b) 5 Washingtons equal 1 Lincoln
    - c) 1 Washington equals 100 Lincolns
    - d) 1 Lincoln equals 20 Washingtons
- Hint: They all are true!

**Classy Math.** Create a class chart just as Mrs. Fibonacci did in *Math Curse*.

- Compile data based on your classroom students for comparing and analysis.
- Create a graph of class birthdays. Which month has the most class birthdays? Which month has the fewest?
- Create a graph of boys vs. girls. Are there more boys than girls in the class? Are there more girls than boys in the class? How many more?
- Graph hair color.
- Graph eye color.
- Graph students with pets and students without pets.
- Problem solve: What is the total number of students in your class? Based on that number, how many feet total in the class? How many fingers total in the class? How many noses total in the class? Have students determine the answers by drawing pictures or by creating number sentences (repeated addition or multiplication.)

## Baloney (Henry P.)

Children can identify globally with the main character, Henry P., in Jon Scieszka's *Baloney (Henry P.)*, even though the story takes place in outer space. After all, what school-age child hasn't experienced the potential for being tardy for school or the consequences of actually being tardy? In Henry P.'s case, he is tardy once too often, and it's permanent lifelong detention. Unless, that is, he has one very good (and very believable) excuse for being late ...



## Language Arts Extension

**Similarities and Differences.** Read the story *Baloney (Henry P.)* to students. Following the story, discuss how the main character, Henry, leads a life similar to children on earth.

## Baloney (Henry P.) and Students on Earth Venn Diagram

Use a Venn diagram to visually organize Henry and his lifestyle to those of students in the class. Examples of what students might compare:

### Baloney (Henry P.)

- setting on a different planet
- has green skin
- travels by rocket
- is an alien

### How We Are Alike

- both go to school
- have eyes, nose, mouth
- can both be tardy
- both have teachers

### Students on Earth

- live on Earth
- do not have green skin
- travel by car, bike, bus...
- are human

Once the Venn diagram is complete, allow students to use it as a visual prompt to complete the compare and contrast writing exercise on page 40.

## An Object by Another Name

In the story *Baloney (Henry P.)*, the author Jon Scieszka implements a variety of languages into the English language. Students might be unfamiliar with many of the words used in various sentences throughout the story. However, encourage students to use text context clues and visual picture clues during the story to ascertain the meaning of each foreign word. Tell them they must go on a special space mission to decode the words in the book. Solicit translations for each page where a new word is introduced. (A decoder is supplied at the back of the book for any words with which students might have difficulty.)



## Author Extensions

### Telling a Tall Tale: Creative Writing

Miss Bugscuffle has a writing assignment for her students. They are to compose a tall tale. A tall tale is a wild tale with exaggerations, just like the story *Baloney* (Henry P.).

After reading the story *Baloney* (Henry P.) with students, explain that they will be writing their own tall tale. Have students compose a fictional story detailing why they are late for school, implementing excuse after excuse into their storyline. Encourage them to be as imaginative and fictional as they'd like.

Point out to students a writing device the author Jon Scieszka implements in *Baloney* (Henry P.). Many pages end with "But ..." This device creates tension and page-turning suspense, so that the reader eagerly anticipates what might follow on each page. Encourage students to use this device in their own tall tale.

A story starter to get your budding authors on the beginning of their journey is on page 41.

### Science Extension

**What Goes Up Must Come Down.** Henry P. Baloney saved himself from zerplatzen all over the speelplaats as he fell because he had not yet learned the law of gravity. On the playground, encourage students to jump up as high as they can. What happens? (They drop back down to the ground.) Gravity is at work.

Explore the concept of gravity with students. Collect various objects in the classroom, such as a pencil, a book, an eraser, or a notebook. Objects may be different sizes and weights. Demonstrate the force of gravity by dropping each object, one by one.

- Drop two different objects from the same height at once. Do they land at the same time?
- Drop two identical objects, such as two quarters or pennies, from different heights. Do they land at the same time?

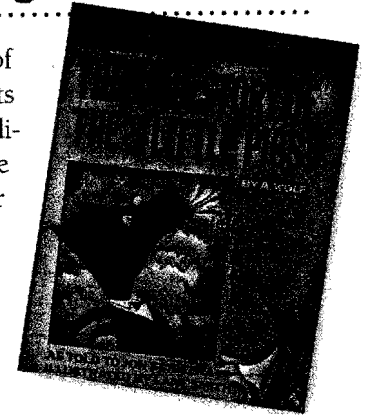
Find an area outdoors with soft dirt or sand. Allow students to drop different objects into the sand or dirt. What type of impression is created? The impression created by the falling objects is not unlike the craters and impressions formed on Earth as objects from space land on its surface.

### Further Explorations

- Look up the word "gravity" in the dictionary.
- Research Sir Isaac Newton.
- Borrow nonfiction books about gravity from the library for students to read.

## The True Story of the Three Little Pigs

Jon Scieszka's version of *The Three Little Pigs* puts a fresh spin on the traditional tale told from the wolf's point of view. Or as the wolf would say, the "true" story ...



### Language Arts Extensions

#### Story-to-Story

**Connections.** Before reading *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, read a traditional version of *The Three Little Pigs*. Doing so will allow students to draw on prior knowledge as they make text-to-text and book-to-book connections between the two versions.

Then, compare how the elements in each story are alike or different. A Venn diagram will work well as a visual way for students to make comparisons between the two stories. Have them compare setting, character, point of view, chain of events, and story ending.

**Extra! Extra! Read All About It!** In the story *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, Alexander T. Wolf offers a retelling of the traditional tale from his point of view, and it's a bit different from the traditional tale.

Divide the class into two groups. Explain that one group will act as journalists for the newspaper covering events that unfold in the traditional tale, *The Three Little Pigs*. The other half of the class will cover the events that unfold in the fractured fairy tale, *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. They will cover: who, what, where, when, and why. After each journalist has completed his/her story, provide them with the opportunity to share their stories with the public: place the