



Pencil sketches out a plan to draw Jackson back into their friendship. *Pencil: A Story with a Point* is a gentle reminder that technology is no match for imagination.

## Story Summary

Pencil and his boy Jackson are a great pair: they draw, they sketch, they scribble. But then Jackson gets Tablet and Pencil finds himself dumped in the dreaded junk drawer. He just can't compete with Tablet's videos, games, and movies. How will Pencil ever reclaim Jackson's attention? With the help of some new pun-loving junk-drawer friends (and a drooling, pencil-chomping dog), Pencil

Pair this book with:

*Waiting for Sophie* by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Carmen Mok

Picture Book Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-047-5 | Pages: 32

## THEMES

Acceptance, friendship, teamwork, resourcefulness, technology, humor

## BISAC CODES

JUV009000 JUVENILE FICTION / Humorous Stories

JUV039060 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Friendship

JUV039220 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Values & Virtues

JUV049000 JUVENILE FICTION / Computers & Digital Media

JUV051000 JUVENILE FICTION / Imagination & Play

## READING LEVEL

Lexile Measure: 570L | Fountas & Pinnell: L

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language, Social Studies, History

**Ann Ingalls** is the author of more than twenty books for children and adults, including *Little Piano Girl*, a finalist for the Crystal Kite Award. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Ann graduated from Michigan State University and worked as an early childhood and special education teacher. She now writes full time in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Dean Griffiths** is a popular picture book artist with more than 25 titles to his name. His many awards include the Christie Harris Illustrated Children's Book Prize for *Maggie Can't Wait*, the Chocolate Lily Award for *Ballerinas Don't Wear Glasses*, and the Rainforest of Reading Award for *Bad Pirate*. Dean lives in Duncan, British Columbia, with his daughter.



**THIS GUIDE CONTAINS:**

| ACTIVITY               | MAIN SUBJECT AREA            | SPECIFIC SKILLS AND TOPICS   |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Read-Aloud             | Comprehension                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate prior knowledge</li> <li>• Infer, predict, make connections</li> </ul> |
| Making Flipbooks       | Media Literacy / Visual Arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of media forms</li> <li>• Solving design challenges</li> </ul>  |
| From Tablet to Tablet  | History / Social Studies     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The history of written communication</li> </ul>                                 |
| Playing Old-School     | Social Studies               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastimes in the 19th century and earlier</li> </ul>                             |
| Junk-Drawer Characters | Writing                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing characters in story writing; using story grammar</li> </ul>          |

**THE READ-ALOUD**

Students will love *Pencil: A Story with a Point* for its sheer entertainment, but it carries an important message for electronics-saturated kids. It models social problem-solving and provides an excellent jumping-off point for rich new learning, as demonstrated in the follow-up activities.

**Learning expectations:**

Students will:

- identify several comprehension strategies and use them before, during, and after reading to understand texts (activate prior knowledge / infer, predict, make connections)
- use stated and implied information and ideas in oral texts to make simple inferences and reasonable predictions

**You Will Need**

- *Pencil: A Story with a Point*
- Chart paper and markers
- Teacher-made flipbook (optional)

**How To:**

**Before Reading**

Teachers may prefer to do an uninterrupted first reading or to just select a few questions (e.g. the predictions) to address on the first reading, and delve into other questions on subsequent readings. Show the cover and read the title, subtitle, author, and illustrator. Invite response. Tell students that the subtitle is a pun. Explain what a pun is, if necessary. Invite students to explain the double meaning of “point” (there is a message or lesson; a pencil has a sharp point). Show the endpapers at the front of the book. Invite students to scan the drawings and relate the story they tell.

**During Reading**

**First spread:** How has the illustrator strengthened the author’s message that Pencil and Jackson were best friends? Which of them do you think is the main character? Watch to see from whose perspective the story will be told. Invite predictions about what will follow “until...”.

**Second spread:** Invite students to relate any personal connections to Jackson if they have acquired an electronic device, and to Pencil, if they have felt displaced when their friend makes a new friend, or a new member is added to their family. Is there anything wrong with being “captivated by Tablet?” How might it become a problem?

Start a “Tablet vs. Pencil” T-chart, comparing what each can do.

| Tablet          | Pencil                    |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Make movies     |                           |
| Draw in color   | Draw in grey              |
| Message Grandma | Write a letter to Grandma |

Later, fill in the gaps and discuss the advantages of each character’s abilities. For example, after students have learned about flipbooks, “Make flipbooks” can be added in Pencil’s column, next to Tablet’s “Make movies.” Students might feel that sending a letter to Grandma is better because, while it takes longer, it can include a hand drawing, which Grandma loves to put up on her fridge. A pencil sketch can be framed and hung on the wall as art.

**Third spread:** Invite predictions as to what the final disgrace will be.

**Fourth spread:** What features of graphic text have the author and illustrator incorporated into this narrative story? For example, there are speech bubbles with words in all caps in a different font. Discuss the puns now or at a later time. Note that, while the mean-spiritedness of Scissors and Ruler

are obvious, Pencil also holds prejudices that are not so obvious. He seems to feel that he is better than the “blunt or broken” junk that lives in the drawer. Teachers may wish to explore this theme.

**Fifth spread:** How is Pencil failing to endear himself to the other junk-drawer inhabitants? Examine how the illustrator has both literally and figuratively represented the phrase “pushed his way to the top.” Note the reactions of the other characters, and how Griffiths has conveyed strong emotion using eyes, eyebrows, and mouth shapes. Students will enjoy drawing their own expressive characters, using this page as inspiration.

**Sixth spread:** Everyone wants a feeling of belonging. How do the words and images work together to convey this thought?

**Seventh spread:** More speech bubbles, facial expressions, and puns for students to notice. Invite students to predict what might happen “the very next day.” Note the foreshadowing in the illustration (Tablet teetering near the edge, Bernie lurking nearby).

**Eighth spread:** Check predictions. How does the font indicate the way we should read the word *smash*?

**Ninth spread:** Many students will relate to Jackson’s emotions here. Discuss how facial expressions and body language work together with the text to convey both characters’ emotions. How does a thought bubble differ from a speech bubble in both form and function?

**Tenth spread:** This spread is enjoyable for its silliness, puns, and more great facial expressions and body language.

**Eleventh spread:** Pencil is changing. Just a few pages back, he was self-centered, feeling superior, and using others to get ahead. Now he is focusing on

the needs of the other person, trying everything he can think of to make Jackson feel better. How can students apply these ideas to their own relationships? Also present here are perseverance and the traditional story structure of two unsuccessful attempts at solving the problem. Invite students to predict what is coming next.

**Twelfth spread:** Asking others for help is a sign of respect, and a route to reconciliation that is sometimes overlooked. How has Pencil restored his relationship with the other items by honoring their gifts and abilities, and how can students apply this to their own relationships? More great facial expressions, body language and pun fun on this spread too!

**Thirteenth spread:** Everyone has different talents to contribute to a project. Come back to this idea in a future group work context. Students may not know what a flipbook is. If you have made one to show them, you might want to demonstrate it now, and point out how drawings like the ones on the endpapers could be assembled to make a flipbook. Tell students that they will soon have a chance to make their own.

**Fourteenth spread:** Giving sincere compliments is a great way to enhance friendships. Encourage students to practice this skill. Enjoy yet another page of expressions and puns here...

**Last page:** ...and here! Note the implication to continue respecting his new friends' talents when Pencil says, "I'll be drawing on your friendship." Have students practice articulating what their peer brings to the table and that they appreciate it. Do this in a variety of work and play contexts.

## AFTER READING

Media Connections: Arrange to have your students watch the movie *Toy Story* and discuss similarities with Pencil. Which character would identify with Pencil? Which character is more like Tablet? What other character

parallels are there? Have students try to draw Pencil or one of the other characters, paying attention to the portrayal of emotion through the eyes, eyebrows, mouth, and body. They can later use Griffiths' technique of personifying common objects to illustrate the stories they write in the Junk-Drawer Characters activity below.



## ACTIVITY 1: MAKING FLIPBOOKS

After reading *Pencil: A Story with a Point*, students will be eager to try making their own animated flipbooks.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- identify elements and characteristics of some media forms (e.g., cartoons use animated drawings)
- use a variety of materials and techniques to respond to design challenges

### You Will Need

- internet access, markers, pencils
- sticky notes, paperbacks, index cards or scrap paper, binder clips

### How To:

1. This YouTube video will give students a good idea of how flipbooks work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njl-uqnmBGA>
2. You will probably want to watch the video yourself first. Try making your own flipbook to help you better guide your students.
3. Depending on the age of your students, you may need to break it down further, giving step-by-step instructions. Give each student a pad of sticky notes and a thick water-based marker in a dark color. Instruct them to turn to the last page, but caution them not to peel back the pages so far that the pages separate. Invite them to make a dot, as they saw on the video. Tell them to turn to the previous page and make sure they can see their initial mark through the paper. This will help them position their next mark. They should make their next dot close to the first, but moved a bit to one side. They will continue turning back pages and making more dots until they have used up at least half the pad of sticky notes. Now they can flip through the booklet, from back to front, and see their dot “move” across the page. Invite students to continue making more complex drawings, as seen in the video. Some more advanced ideas are shown here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un-BdBSOGKY>

4. An alternative to sticky notes is old paperback books. Students draw their moving pictures in the margins. You might be able to get some donated. You can also make your own booklets from scrap paper or index cards. Try to get the outer edge flush enough to flip easily, and they need to be quite thick, so try using binder clips to hold them together.
5. Older students will enjoy searching for more examples of flipbooks online.
6. Once they have learned the technique, have students create a meaningful flipbook on a relevant topic as their term media project.
7. Research the history of animation, from flipbooks and traditional hand-drawn animation to clay animation and computer-generated animation. Students could create an animated video instead of a flipbook as their media project.

## ACTIVITY 2: FROM TABLET TO TABLET

This activity explores the evolution of written communication from clay tablets to electronic devices, including modern-day tablets.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- investigate ways of life in early societies
- describe some key similarities and differences between early societies and present-day society
- demonstrate an understanding of simple chronology by identifying and organizing some important events
- use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to respond to design challenges
- demonstrate an awareness of the meaning of signs and symbols encountered in their daily lives and in works of art
- identify habits and behaviors (e.g., excessive screen time) that can be detrimental to health and explain how people can be encouraged to adopt healthier alternatives

## You Will Need

- self-hardening or baking clay, craft sticks or chopsticks, internet access
- scrap paper, blender, bucket, water, foil baking pan, screen, plastic basin, towels, rolling pin
- dip pens, nibs, ink, paper, adult volunteer
- a variety of pencils of varying hardness, paper
- chart paper or white board and markers

## How To:

1. Assist students in researching early cuneiform writing, done by pressing a wedge-shaped stylus into a damp clay tablet, which was later baked to harden. Have students create their own tablets using modeling clay which can be air-dried or baked. Although cuneiform does not translate directly into the English alphabet, many examples of “cuneiform alphabets” are available online that depict such a translation. While they may be gross approximations, students can have fun using them to write their names and secret messages using cuneiform-like symbols. Craft sticks with an end sawn straight across or chopsticks with the wide end whittled into a wedge can be used to make the impressions.
2. Assist students in researching the invention of paper. Have them make their own paper using items from the recycling bin. Instructions can be found here: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Paper>
3. Assist students in researching the invention and evolution of pens. Arrange for them to try writing with dip pens (the kind dipped in ink and used in pen-and-ink drawing). You will want to arrange for a small student-teacher-ratio to ensure no ink is spilled! One way to do this is to have a volunteer take students one at a time.
4. Assist students in researching the invention and evolution of pencils. View a video about how pencils are made, like this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZHpIfGdAWE>. Afterwards, provide a selection of different types of pencils, from 4B to 4H, and allow students to exper-

iment with drawing with the different types. A 4H pencil is quite hard, provides a very sharp point and makes a thin, light line. It might be used for engineering drawings. A 4B pencil is very soft, makes a wide, dark line, and smudges easily. It is popular for sketching and shading. An HB (also called #2) pencil, between the two extremes, is widely used for general writing purposes. An article answering several questions (including why there are two numbering systems for pencils) is here: <https://cwpencils.com/blogs/news/131980803-beginners-guide-to-pencil-shopping-a-guide-to-grades>. For older students, invite an expert to come and teach a lesson on engineering drawing with rulers and hard pencils, and another lesson on contour drawing using soft pencils. To promote respect for the pencil, attach each student’s name near the eraser end of their pencil(s) (e.g. cut up a class list or use permanent marker; either way, protect the name with clear tape). This way, if one lands on the floor, the owner can be found and fewer pencils will be swept into the garbage at the end of the day. If students keep pencils in a communal bin on the table, they can still have their individually assigned pencils (and other tools). It promotes responsibility and helps reduce the spread of germs.

5. Assist students in researching the evolution of computers and other electronic devices including tablets. Include ways in which such devices have helped (e.g. telesurgery) and harmed (e.g. video game addiction, neck problems) humans and the world. Make a pros and cons chart. It is now widely recommended that people limit screen time, especially for children. Brainstorm ways kids can entertain themselves without electronics, including both indoor and outdoor activities. Urge students to make their screen time count, by engaging in educational activities when using their devices.
6. Record your research on a large timeline and add to it whenever you learn about another form of written communication.

## ACTIVITY 3: PLAYING OLD-SCHOOL

In *Pencil: A Story with a Point*, the boy, like many children today, was taken in by the appeal of an electronic device and forgot how satisfying low-tech amusements can be. In this activity, your students will rediscover that satisfaction.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- compare ways of life around the beginning of the 19th century, and describe some of the changes between that era and the present day

### You Will Need

- large buttons, string
- pencils and paper
- a variety of traditional games and toys
- a variety of papers, yarns and fabrics for weaving
- slates and chalk

### How To:

Research, make (or purchase) and use a variety of games and other pastimes from the 19th century and earlier. Have a special day devoted to playing these old-time games. Here are some examples:

1. Button spinners: All that is needed is a large (1" or bigger) button, with 2 or 4 holes (not the kind with a loop on the back), and a piece of string about 30" long. Thread the string through two holes, tie the ends together, and you are ready to play. Adjust the string so the button is in the middle, with a long loop on each side. Hold one loop in each hand. Move hands in forward circles so that the button begins winding itself around the string. When it is tightly wound, pull firmly out with your hands so that the button unwinds while the string remains taut. It should fully unwind and then rewind the other way, like a yo-yo. As this is happening, move hands together just a bit and get ready to pull them apart again. This action takes some practice, so the teacher should practice first before helping students. Once you have learned the trick, you will be able

to keep it going for many minutes. Most grade three students are able to learn how to do it, but it might be too challenging for kindergarten and grade one. Detailed instructions with picture and video can be found here: <http://theamericanhomemaker.blogspot.com/2008/07/pioneer-button-spinner.html>.

2. Pencil-and-paper games such as "Scribbles" (where one child makes a quick scribble on paper and the other child turns it into a picture of something), "Dots and Boxes" as explained at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dots\\_and\\_Boxes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dots_and_Boxes), and of course, flipbooks!
3. Traditional games such as marbles, dominoes, tiddlywinks, pickup sticks, jacks, "Five Stones," Mancala, checkers, Snakes and Ladders, card games, and building card houses.
4. Parlor games like Charades and Pin the Tail on the Donkey.
5. Toys, such as dolls, Jacob's Ladder and spinning tops. Try making your own dolls from yarn (<https://www.littlehouseliving.com/simple-toys-make-yarn-dolls.html>) or corn husks (<https://www.giftofcuriosity.com/how-to-make-corn-husk-dolls/>) and tops from a pencil stub pushed through a cardboard circle (<http://www.things-to-make-and-do.co.uk/paper-and-card-projects/spinning-tops/spinning-tops.html>). Jacob's Ladders may be available from a local crafter.
6. Other activities such as weaving, using slates and chalk, ring or bean bag toss, stilt walking and hoop rolling. If the last two are deemed too high-risk, students could watch a demonstration.



## ACTIVITY 4: JUNK-DRAWER CHARACTERS

Students will use everyday objects as inspiration for their writing, as Ann Ingalls did in *Pencil: A Story with a Point*.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- generate ideas about a potential topic, using a variety of strategies and resources
- identify and order main ideas and supporting details, using graphic organizers (e.g., a story of grammar: characters, setting, problem, solution)
- write short texts using a specific form

### You Will Need

- Blackline master Junk-Drawer Inventory (one copy per student)
- Basket or bin of “junk-drawer items”
- Chart paper and markers
- Blackline master Story Grammar

### How To:

1. Bring to school a basket or bin of items that might be found in a “junk drawer.” These can be office supplies, tools, utensils, grooming items, toys, or unrelated random items.
2. Jointly with your students, examine the items and choose four on which to model your characters. Demonstrate how to name and describe each on a copy of the blackline master Junk-Drawer Inventory. Tell students that they will do this at home. Address any concerns raised by students such as “My family doesn’t have a junk drawer” by asking questions such as, “Does your family have forks? Where do you keep them? What else is in that spot?” In some cases, you might suggest that students go to the home of a friend or relative and do the assignment there. Or they could use a bin of toys or assorted manipulatives in the classroom, or the contents of their desk or pencil case. Send the inventory sheet home.

3. Once students have returned their homework sheets, begin to model the rest of the story-writing process (described below). If any students have not completed the sheet, they can use their imaginations or items from the classroom. After you have modeled each step, have students complete the step independently (or guided in small groups, as necessary) using their own inventory. You may wish to use the blackline master Story Grammar.
  - a. From your inventory, choose an object to become the main character, taking its characteristics into consideration. Choose another to be the wise, old mentor, and one to be the supportive friend. The fourth character is flexible. It could be another supportive friend, or an annoying acquaintance, or just left out of the story. The villain will be a character or circumstance that does not reside in the junk drawer.
  - b. Begin writing. Introduce the main character and setting by describing “a day in the life” of the main character, in which nothing unusual happens. This is what the main character is doing when our story begins. It likely includes the supportive friend, so that character will also be introduced. Model this step, and all others, with the amount of detail and sophistication that you will expect from your students. This will depend on their grade and prior experience. This is a great place for a descriptive paragraph including sensory imagery (describe what the character sees, hears, smells, feels). Before writing, you could read some exemplary opening paragraphs from children’s books that begin with a description (e.g. *Timo’s Party* by Victoria Allenby, *Hurry Up, Franklin* by Paulette Bourgeois).
  - c. Here, you will describe the initiating event, the enormous problem that presents itself, or the main character articulating his/her lifelong dream. Get students to think/pair/share to suggest a range of possible events or dreams. Choose one of them for your modeled story (which should be turning into a shared story by this point) and urge students to contemplate all the suggestions they hear as possibilities for their own story. When they begin writing their own event, some

students may need to confer with you or a peer before they come up with an idea.

- d. The quest begins. Describe how the main character and supportive friend set out to solve the problem or achieve the dream, using their inherent characteristics, as described on the inventory sheet. They encounter the wise old mentor, who encourages them.
- e. Enter the villain. This should be outside of the junk drawer, but consistent with the world of the characters, and can be a person, a thing or a circumstance. Examples: pet, garbage can, garbage compactor, vacuum cleaner, visiting undisciplined cousin, a parent deciding to declutter the home, the sale or sublet of the home to strangers, etc. Describe the danger in which the characters find themselves as well as their feelings.
- f. The day is saved by the main character's own grit and determination and his/her loyal friend, helped greatly by the arrival of the wise old mentor, or the other supportive friend, who had caught up after deciding to join the quest after all, or the annoying acquaintance who had a change of heart and is now an ally.
- g. Optional: return to "a day in the life" but with a greater sense of self-satisfaction.

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