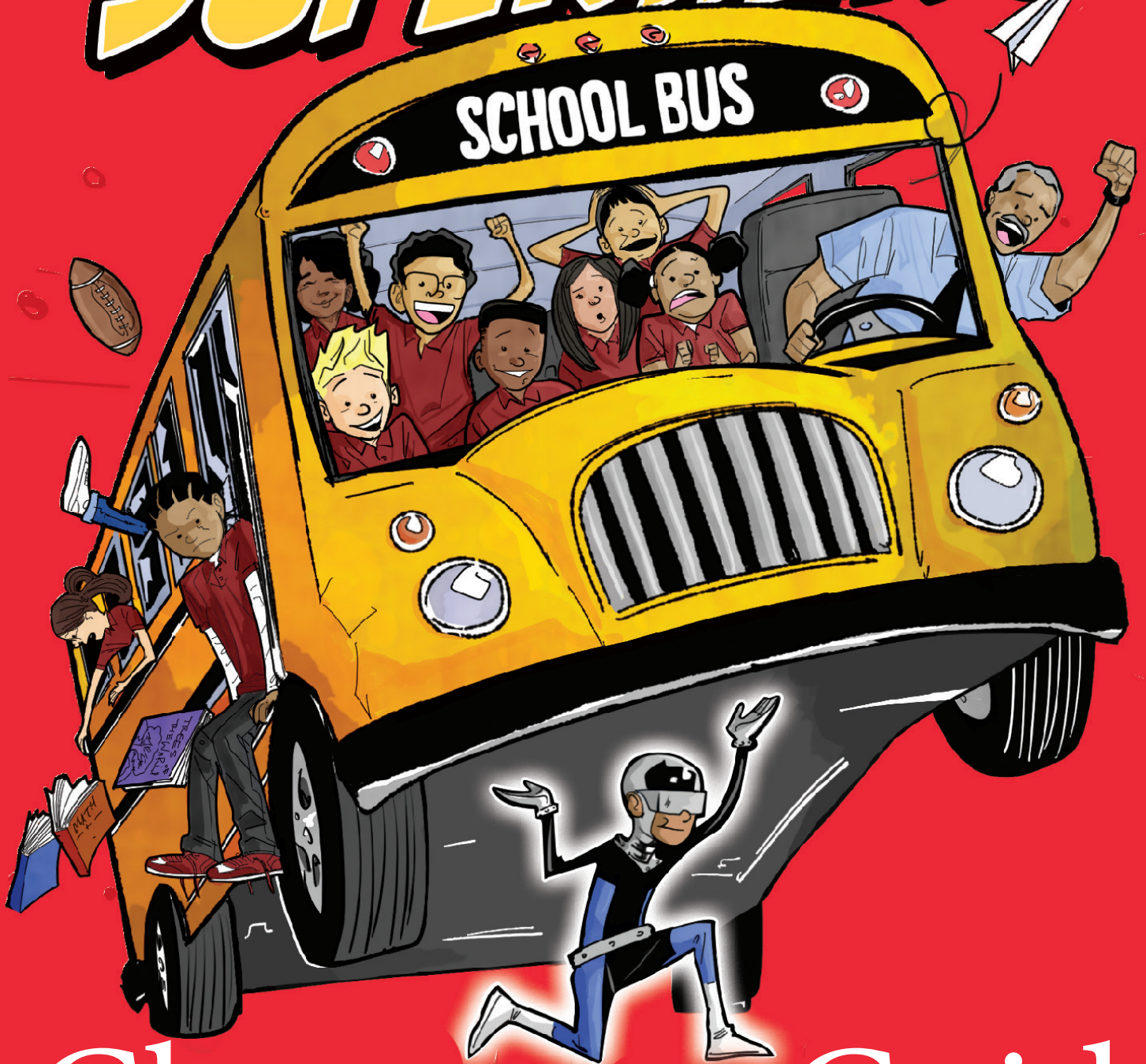


PUBLIC SCHOOL *SUPERHERO*



Classroom Guide

PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERHERO

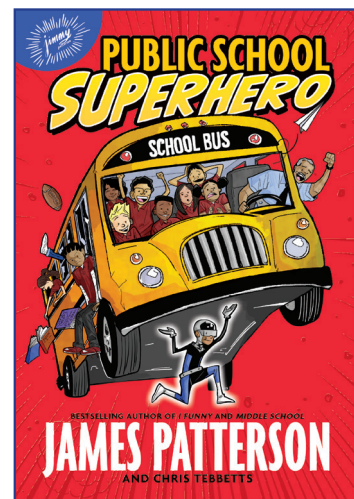
Classroom Guide

About the Book

Kenny Wright is a middle schooler in Washington, DC, who thinks of himself as “Stainlezz Steel,” a public school superhero, but the bullies at school only think of him as “Grandma’s Boy.” Kenny suffers from school bullying—the constant barrage of threats, the physical abuse, the indignity of being stuffed

—in his locker, and the disciplinary consequences for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. When a new principal, Dr. Yetty James, aka Dr. Yetty, arrives at Union Middle School (UMS), the school begins to handle altercations between the students differently. After Dr. Yetty sends Kenny and one of his bullies, Ray-Ray Powell, to detention due to a fight over chess pieces, she assigns Kenny to teach Ray-Ray how to play chess. As their lessons progress, the two begin a shaky friendship, and Kenny asks Ray-Ray to give him lessons on how to change his reputation at school and avoid being a target for the tough guys. Kenny takes Ray-Ray’s advice, but that requires him to do things he is not comfortable with: riding in cars with tough

guys, stealing from stores, and lying to his grandmother. Kenny is no longer a target, but he is in over his head and doesn’t know how to untangle himself from all the lies.



Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students to investigate the differences among schools in large metropolitan cities, and schools in suburban and rural areas. How do these differences affect the way students learn?

Curriculum Connections

English/Language Arts

The setting is essential to the plot and characters in *Public School Superhero*.

1. Ask students to write a detailed description of the setting, including the location, time of year, elapsed time, and other factors they consider important. Along with their descriptions, have students write an explanation of how the setting impacts the other elements of the story.
2. Have students use their descriptions and explanations as a basis for small-group literature-circle discussions.
3. Have each group debrief and share their insights with the whole class after their individual group discussions.

Writing

When the school district transfers Ms. Yetty to another school, the community and students are outraged, and their reaction forces the school district leaders to respond to the community.

1. Ask students to write a poem, a letter, or an essay conveying their reaction to the way the community supported Ms. Yetty and UMS. They should include specific examples from the text as well as figurative language.
2. Have students share their writing in small groups of five or six.

Theatre/Drama

Kenny is immersed in conflict, both internal and external, and his reaction to the conflict is what helps move the story forward.



1. Ask students to make a list of conflicts, both internal and external, explaining how Kenny resolves each of them.
2. Have students work in small groups and write a skit depicting one of the conflicts Kenny experiences. Students may incorporate drama, exaggeration, humor, sarcasm, or other elements to highlight the conflicts.
3. Have students practice and then perform their skits for the class.

Curriculum Connections (continued)

Social Studies

Tiny and his friends use a variety of techniques to bully Kenny: name calling, intimidation, and threats. Ask students to get into groups of three and research programs available to help prevent bullying, noting the similarities and differences in the programs.

1. Ask each group to evaluate the programs and to select one to recommend to their school.
2. Then ask each group to make a presentation to the class explaining the reason(s) for their choice. After a class discussion of the various programs, have students come to a consensus on the selection of one program.
3. Appoint three people to present the selected program to the school's administrative team for possible implementation.



History

Kenny's grandma says, "If we see something wrong in the world, it's up to us—not someone else—to stand up and be heard" (page 100). The reader learns that Kenny's grandma marched in Selma; that Dr. Yetty teaches African American history and refers to Martin Luther King Jr.'s first speech, the accomplishments of people in Egypt, and Bessie Coleman; and that Kenny acknowledges Stokely Carmichael, Medgar Evers, and Marcus Garvey, all African American men who stood up and were heard.

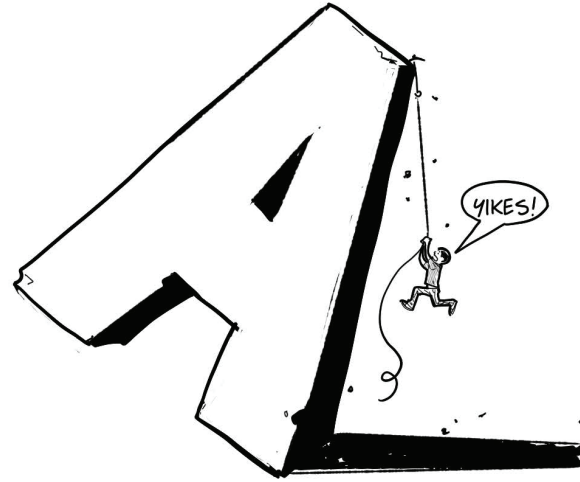
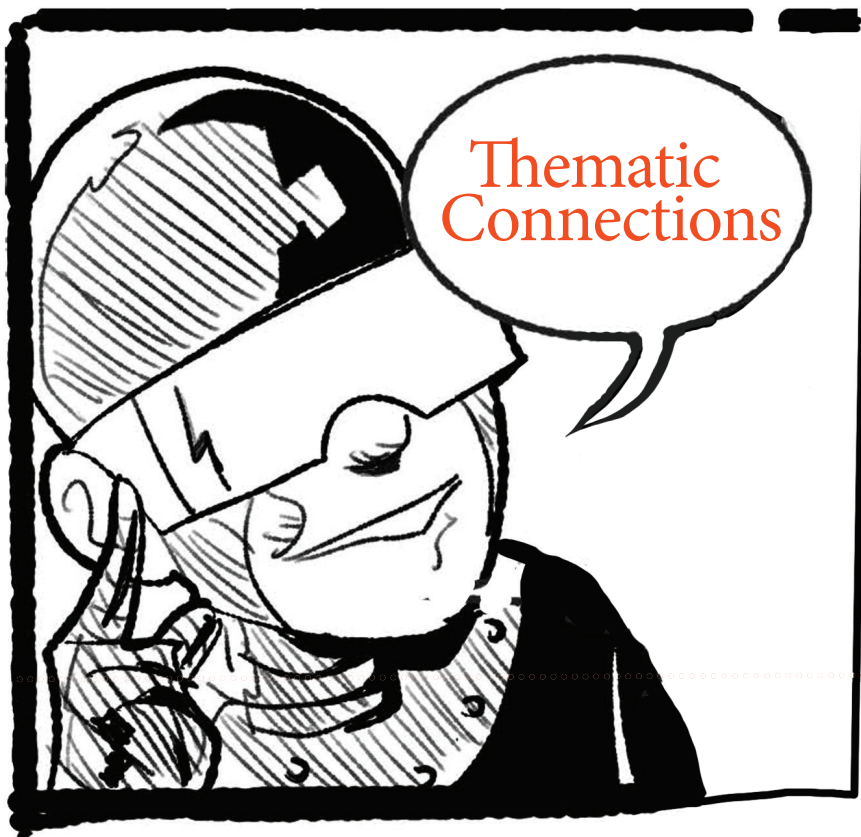
1. Assign students to groups of three and ask each group to research African American history to select a person or a group of people who fought for change.
2. Then, ask each group to create a multimedia presentation using the information they obtain in their research.
3. Have students share their presentations first with the class and then with other classrooms in the school.

Art

The graphic illustrations serve as a way for the reader to see what Kenny imagines when he becomes the comic book hero, Stainlezz Steel.

1. Ask students to find a passage in the book when Kenny could have been more Steel and less Kenny and to illustrate that passage with a comic-page layout.
2. Display the artwork in the classroom.





Family Relationships

Kenny and his grandmother are a family of two, and so are Ray-Ray and his brother, Nicky.

- How do these two families differ?
- How is the bond between Ray-Ray and his brother similar to the bond between Kenny and his grandma?
- What is lacking in both Kenny's and Ray-Ray's lives?
- How does Kenny's grandma help Ray-Ray?
- Kenny says Ray-Ray is a part of his family. What does this mean to both Kenny and Ray-Ray?

Friendships

Kenny has a small group of friends who enjoy similar interests and do their best to avoid the bullies.

- What incident occurs that begins to shake the bonds of these four friends?
- How does the relationship between Ray-Ray and Kenny begin?
- Why does Ray-Ray want to help Kenny stop the bullies?
- How does Kenny help Ray-Ray?
- What do the boys learn about each other's families that helps them gain understanding of their actions?

Intergenerational Relationships

- How does Kenny show gratitude to his Grandma for taking him in and raising him?
- Why does Kenny think his Grandma is like a superhero?
- How does she show Kenny what it is to be a person of integrity?
- What lessons does grandma instill in Kenny to help him be the man who will fight for what is right?
- How does grandma G-Ma earn the respect of her community?



Discussion Questions



1. Kenny says to the reader, “My school is way worse than your school” (page 6). What evidence does the reader have that makes this statement believable?
2. Why do the students respect Dr. Yetty? What new programs does she put in place to help the students at UMS?
3. What advice does Ray-Ray give Kenny about how to stop being a target for the bullies? How does this advice both help and hurt Kenny?
4. How did Nicky Powell earn his reputation? Why does riding in a car with him help Kenny?
5. Why does Kenny feel like a fake when his grandma asks him to be a student ambassador and speak to the other parents and school leaders?
6. Why is Kenny proud when the parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles put up a fight for Ms. Yetty and a better school?
7. What advice does Dr. Yetty give Kenny before he speaks to the crowd of people at the march? How can courage feel like being scared?
8. What changes at UMS does Kenny help make happen because he thinks big? What can you think BIG about in order to help change your world?

