



Making Millions

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Teaching Guide

By Peter Heaney

RATIONALE & THEMES

In book two of the Bubble Street Gang series, Nicholas is dismayed when his parents balk at funding yet another artistic masterclass to support his acting ambitions.

Determined to offer whatever support she can, Cass leads Lex and Nicholas, the other members of the gang, as they embark on an hilarious trail of improbable fund-raising ventures and mishaps that they hope will raise the cash needed for Nicholas's course.

Although the gang creates a trail of comic mishap, the themes are introduced with a subtle touch and include:

- Friendship
- Leadership
- Peer influence & control
- Insecurity
- Secrets
- Fairness
- Taking responsibility
- Loyalty

SUMMARY

Exasperated by the shortage of investigation or adventure opportunities for their gang, Cass becomes convinced that her class has an additional, invisible pupil enrolled. However, despite all her considerable mental powers, she is frustrated in her attempts to unmask him.

Discovering that her friend Nicholas, one of the three members of the gang, is to be denied the opportunity to take part in a special masterclass in costume design because his parents are reluctant to fund yet another arts class for him, Cass and Lex promptly adopt the cause of raising the necessary funds for him.

Determined to become millionaires, they embark on a series of hysterical ventures to try to raise the cash.

Their ideas result in all manner of mishap, until they decide to bake and sell pear pies as a last resort to raise the money they need.

Forced to raid the orchard in an empty house, which they suspect is haunted, they discover to their surprise that the house is no longer empty. Cass solves the riddle of their invisible classmate and their entrepreneurial efforts finally succeed.

APPROACH

This is a very enjoyable and entertaining read. Although the plot is comic, it is very engaging, and provides many opportunities for discussion.

This guide divides the story into three sections, and the activities offer suggestions on developing the themes.

Section 1 Millionaires Pages 9-67

SUMMARY

Cass is convinced that there is an invisible boy in her class, and she is determined to use all her sleuthing skills to expose him.

However, her strategies to trick him into a reaction and reveal his presence simply land her in trouble with Mr Freebs, her teacher.

When she discovers that Nicholas is unable to take part in the costume design masterclass because of lack of funds, the 'Invisible Boy' investigation takes a back seat as she, Lex and Nicholas (*AKA The Bubble Street Gang*) apply their initiative and talents to raising the necessary money for him to attend.

In the process, they also hope to become millionaires.

None of their ideas seem promising until Cass accompanies her father to an antique shop. Amazed that her father is prepared to buy items that she thinks are old and worthless, she is struck by the idea that a jumble sale might be the answer to their problem. The friends invest their pocket money in the resources they need to set up the sale.

However, the items are more tat than tasteful and their initiative collapses, leaving them dejected, out of pocket and bereft of any more ideas.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Read p10.** The Bubble Street Gang is secret. Their activities are secret and their secret clubhouse is used for secret meetings. Why does it need to be secret? What is the attraction in keeping things secret? Are too many secrets really healthy? Should children be encouraged to keep secrets? How would you recognise when secrets should not be kept?
- Read p26.** Cass has to endure a loss of privilege as punishment because she misbehaved with the paint. Was Mr Freebs correct to deny her playground time? Was this a reasonable sanction? Are there activities such as playground time that should never be withheld?
- Read pp33-35.** Cass makes a performance of entering the clubhouse in an attempt to impress Lex and Nicholas. What sort of friend would Cass make for you? Would you like to be one of her friends? How would you tolerate her behaviour? If the others behaved as she did, how might Cass react?

- **Read pp43-44.** Cass is amazed that her father is considering buying furniture that appears old and distressed. What is the appeal of vintage items that can make them more valuable than modern equivalents? What is the attraction for people in collecting these items?

ACTIVITIES

1. My name is (Read p9)

Cass uses a combination of fact and hyperbole to introduce herself, creating a very interesting and amusing image of who she is.

Using the same style, create a similar introduction for yourself that combines fact and the exaggerated description of a personal characteristic that you think is your best quality.

2. Essential (Read pp18-19)

Nicholas realises with embarrassment that he has used the adjective 'essential' three times to describe his art, acting and voice classes.

He knows that his vocabulary is much better than that.

He takes a deep breath and in a calm voice gives Cass three convincing reasons why his other classes are vital for his acting career development.

Could you perform the speech that he made to Cass?

3. I'm invisible (Read pp22-23)

Cass is frustrated by the lack of reaction from the invisible boy to her attempts to force him to reveal himself.

Imagine that you are the invisible boy, and describe the episode from your point of view.

What do you think as you watch Cass approach? Why were you silent? Are you amused or annoyed? Did you consider retaliating?

4. The business plan (Read pp37-39)

The gang is frustrated because none of their ideas for raising money seems viable. They need your help.

In groups, brainstorm and record on a large sheet of paper, ten ideas for a company they could start. It doesn't matter how silly the ideas seem at first.

Discuss each idea and select a final three, and then choose the one you think has the most potential to be successful.

You will probably need finance, so you will need to write a short business plan to convince the bank, or parents and neighbours, to lend you the money to get started.

[www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Business-\(for-Kids\)](http://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Business-(for-Kids))

5. Horror (Read p51)

Raising his arms in defence, Nicholas watches, terrified, as the tidal wave of bubbling lava sweeps towards him.

Create an illustration to demonstrate how good Nicholas is at producing realistic facial expressions.

6. Jumble sale (Read p54)

Cass has created a flyer advertising their jumble sale. However, she thinks it could be more exciting, in order to attract more attention.

Can you help produce a really exciting poster for the local shops, so that anyone who sees it will be unable to resist visiting the sale?

7. Losers (Read p62)

Sasha was not impressed by the jumble sale, and decides to share her opinions with her friends.

Taking the opportunity to mock Cass, Lex and Nicholas, she sends nasty texts to her friends describing what she saw.

Make a copy of a text she sent, and a short conversation thread of the replies she received. Do you think that all of the replies were mean as well?

Section 2 Tour Guide Pages 68-121

SUMMARY

Dejected by their lack of success with the jumble sale, Cass seeks comfort by chatting with the 'invisible boy'. Overheard by Nathan from the rival Na-Sa-Ji gang, she has to endure more teasing.

Launching their next venture, Cass persuades their neighbour, the mild-mannered Mr Manning, to take their local knowledge tour. However, the minutia of the detail leaves him unimpressed, so they expose him to their 'Virtual Holiday' tour instead.

When they manage to untangle his hair from the fan that is simulating a gentle tropical breeze, he makes his excuses and beats a swift retreat indoors.

Refusing to be defeated, they unveil their 'Ghost Tour', convinced that it will guarantee the financial return they need.

Planning the experience for the participants, Cass has to endure more teasing as she tries again to unmask the 'invisible boy'.

Nicholas and Lex, costumed and made-up, position themselves along the route that Cass will take on the tour, ready to leap out and frighten everyone.

Guiding her charges into the path of Lex and Nicholas, Cass has misjudged the impact of their costumes and special effects. The Ghost Tour culminates in a frantic and terrifying scramble to escape the wrath of a bad-tempered bull.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read pp69-71.** After Cass talks to the 'invisible boy', she feels much better. He doesn't say anything, but she believes he is listening and this helps. How does it help to have someone listen to you? Why is it better if it is a stranger? Who was Cass really talking to?
- **Read pp72-73.** Cass belongs to one gang and Sasha belongs to another. Each seems to enjoy being part of their gang. Why does being in a different gang encourage them to be mean to each other? Why do gangs exclude people who are not members? Is it really sensible to be part of a gang?
- **Read p91.** Cass has just learned about 'artistic license', and is delighted because it means she can make things up without feeling guilty. Is she still lying though? Is it ever right to lie or bend the truth? Is exaggeration the same as lying? What is the difference between artistic license and lying?
- **Read pp101-103.** Both Lex and Nicholas are in costume, and the ghost tour has proved very popular. Why are so many people interested in the macabre or like to watch scary films? How can it be entertaining to allow yourself to be frightened? Is it dangerous to do this? Are there scary experiences that you should never expose yourself to?

ACTIVITIES

1. Where I live (Read pp77-79)

Cass is leading Mr Manning on their first tour. Unfortunately, he is not very interested in what she is showing him, and is anxious for the tour to finish quickly.

If you were to organise a walking tour of your school or local area for visitors, what interesting items would you include?

In groups, create an itinerary that shows six interesting items and six trivial items.

How would you decide which were the interesting items?

2. My virtual holiday (Read pp81-88)

Mr Manning has finally escaped indoors and is sitting down to relax when his phone rings.

It is his son, who asks him, 'How was your day, Dad?'

Taking a deep breath, Mr Manning describes his experience on the virtual holiday.

Compose the conversation you think they might have.

3. The ghost story (Read p90)

Cass is having difficulty researching suitable ghost stories for her ghost tour.

She needs lots of scary material if it is to be a success, so she has decided to include a section called Ghost Stories from Ireland, where she will tell ghost stories from other parts of the country.

Submit a really scary story from your area for her to include. You can add illustrations as well to identify your location.

4. Fear (Read p99)

Lex can climb trees and dangle from the rafters fearlessly. However, when she is asked to speak in public, she freezes in panic.

Everyone has his or her own individual fear, which is sometimes difficult to explain.

Describe your own particular fear, something that fills you with panic, and explain how you feel when you are confronted with it and how you deal with it.

5. Can you hear that? (Read pp111-118)

Cass has decided to add a little atmosphere to her ghost tour and has prepared a soundtrack of really scary sounds that she intends to play softly each time she stops during the tour.

Help her to prepare some suitably eerie sounds for each stop.

Use your imagination to create and then record the sounds, using your own voices and any instruments you think might be suitable.

6. It was scary, Mammy (Read p120)

As Nicholas swoops over the fence, his cloak billowing behind him, Cass's audience scatters in terror and flees screaming.

They don't stop running until they reach home and safety. There, breathless, they gasp a description of what they saw and what they thought was happening, as their parents try to soothe their fears through their sobs and gasps.

Write the dialogue and description for one of these homecomings.

Section 3 The Invisible Boy Pages 122-185

SUMMARY

Dejected by the fiasco of the Ghost Tour, Cass, Lex and Nicholas seek comfort in the clubhouse, where unfortunately there isn't even a cookie to cheer them up.

Resigned to failure, they meet Lex's granny on the way home. She offers tea, biscuits and a little reverse psychology to reignite their enthusiasm and invention.

Returning home, Cass discovers that her twin younger siblings have 'visited' her room, as she surveys the chaos they have left behind.

Soothed by her mum with a plate of peanut and banana sandwiches, the gang members attempt another brainstorming session, and decide to try to bake and sell pear pies.

Unfortunately, the only source of pears is in the garden of a deserted house that they believe is haunted.

Steeling themselves, they approach the deserted house and Cass agrees to climb into the garden and gather the pears they need.

A softly spoken 'Hello' frightens Cass and she runs, dropping the pears. Halted by another call, she sees a boy approach her, his arms full of the pears she dropped.

Introductions reveal him to be Martyn, her 'invisible boy'. His family has recently moved into the house, and he has been invisible as illness prevented him from attending school.

He reveals a wish for excitement, and Cass offers to include him in their plans.

Serendipity finally smiles on their efforts when they discover that Martyn's father is a pastry chef. He offers not only to help them to bake the pies, but also agrees to sell them on his stall in the market.

He supervises and directs them in the kitchen, and they produce a batch of perfect pear tarts.

The pear tarts are a success, selling out and allowing them to secure sufficient funds for Nicholas to join the masterclass.

At the costume exhibition, Sasha and Jim arrive to mock Nicholas's unusual alien costume design. However, a sustained round of applause from Cass forces them to leave, leaving Nicholas to bask in the glow of Cass's praise.

Later, Cass connects some new observations, and reaches the conclusion that aliens have been using her neighbour's garden as a secret landing place. The next mystery and adventure for the Bubble Street Gang has therefore presented itself.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Read p125.** Her mum made Cass refund the ghost tour money. Was she right to suggest this? The children had paid for a ghost tour in anticipation of being scared, and this is exactly what had happened. Were they entitled to a refund, or was her mum simply trying to soothe the angry parents? Is this fair?
- **Read pp134-135.** Lex's granny explains that her friend Mabel continues to play poker despite being terrible at it, because she enjoys the game more than she enjoys winning. Should success be the most important objective when we take part in an activity? What other things matter when you agree to take part in an activity?

- **Read p146.** Cass justifies taking the pears, saying that no one really owns them. Is 'Finders Keepers' a reasonable position to take when we find something? Is it right to take something without trying to discover who owns it? When is taking something without permission not stealing?
- **Read p179.** The Na-Sa-Ji club have come to gloat at Nicholas's exhibition. This is a mean type of bullying. Why did they do this? Why do some people like to make fun of others? How can you deal with this type of behaviour?

ACTIVITIES

1. The club wall (Read pp135)

Lex's granny reminds Cass, Nicholas and Lex that success shouldn't be the only reason for doing things. She suggests that a lot of enjoyment can be found in participating irrespective of whether success is achieved or not.

Cass doesn't want to forget her advice, and together they decide to create an inspirational poster for their clubhouse wall to remind them.

Can you help them to create the poster?

2. Over the wall (Read pp147-150)

The gang manages to scale the wall and Cass drops into the garden to gather the pears.

The high wall, the dark trees and the fear on the faces of Cass, Lex and Nicholas make this a very visual section of the story.

O'Brien Press thought that they could tell this part of the story as a cartoon.

Could you create a single-page, six-frame cartoon to tell this section of the story?

www.mykidsadventures.com/create-comic-strip-kids/

3. The recipe (Read p160)

Martyn suggests helpfully that his dad has lots of good recipes that they can use.



ERIKA MCGANN is from Drogheda and lives in Dublin in her own secret clubhouse (which is actually an apartment). She spends her time solving mysteries and having brilliant adventures (well, she writes about them anyway). She likes cold weather (because it's an excuse to drink hot chocolate by the gallon) and cheesy jokes (because cheesy jokes are always funny, even when they're not funny).

Erika regularly attends festivals, as well as visiting bookshops and schools, to talk about her books.

Find out more at www.obrien.ie/erika-mcgann

Most people like to share their own favourite recipes and encourage others to try them.

Can you select and then share your own favourite recipe?

You can include a review and illustration of the dish for a class recipe booklet.

4. Martyn's diary (Read pp165-171)

Martyn is delighted to have found three new friends and is thrilled at the opportunity to spend time with them.

His illness has prevented him from attending school, and as a result he likes to observe people carefully when he is with them.

Although enjoying himself, he watches Cass, Lex and Nicholas carefully, and how they behave with each other.

That evening, in his diary, he writes a description of the cooking session, including a detailed description of everything he observed.

Create his diary page.

5. Pear tarts (Read pp172-173)

The pear tarts are deliciously successful, and the batch they made has sold out.

To add a little character to their creation, Cass decides that they will compose haiku poems for the tarts and write them in their best handwriting on each of the bags that the tarts are sold in.

Compose three separate haiku poems for them to write on the bags.

www.poetry4kids.com/lessons/how-to-write-a-haiku/

6. I've noticed (Read p183)

Cass's observation skills are excellent. However, her imagination sometimes exaggerates what she sees.

Imagine that you are giving Cass a tour of your local area.

What unusual observations might she make, and how might she dramatise what she sees?

Choose three unusual observations that you think she might make.

CASS AND THE BUBBLE STREET GANG

Cass and her best friends, Lex and Nicholas, are the Bubble Street Gang! They investigate crimes, solve mysteries and have brilliant adventures.

You can read their first adventure in *The Clubhouse Mystery*.

