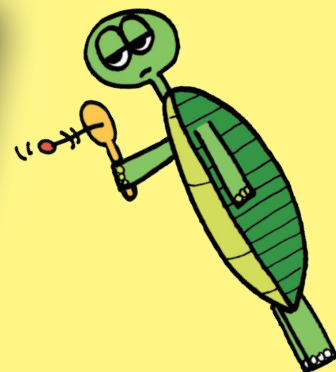




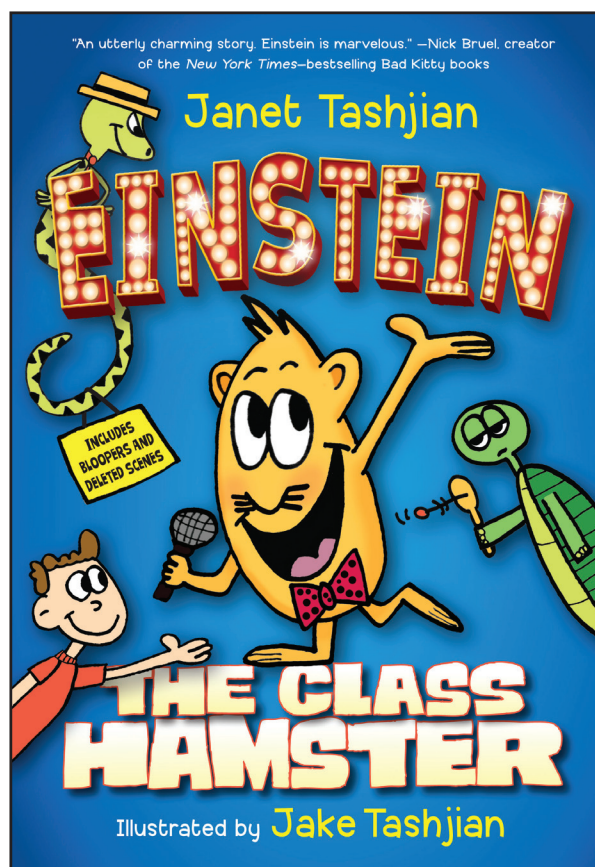
# EINSTEIN

## THE CLASS HAMSTER



## COMMON CORE GUIDE & WORKSHEETS

Prepared by Maureen Connolly & Janet Tashjian



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### This Teacher's Guide to EINSTEIN THE CLASS HAMSTER

provides resources and ideas to strengthen students' depth of understanding and critical thinking regarding the book's central ideas and themes. The recommended assignments are designed in accordance to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

### ABOUT THE TEACHER'S GUIDE AUTHORS

**Maureen Connolly, EdD**, is a professor of education at The College of New Jersey. She is the coauthor of *Getting to the Core of English Language Arts, Grades 6-12: How to Meet the Common Core State Standards with Lessons from the Classroom* and *Getting to the Core of Literacy for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, Grades 6-12*. She lectures and consults with schools around the country to guide teachers in using creative means to help their students reach the Common Core State Standards. As a consultant with CBK Associates, Maureen develops book guides like this one, integrating Common Core State Standards. For more information, visit [www.cbkassociates.com](http://www.cbkassociates.com).

**Janet Tashjian** has written early chapter books as well as middle-grade and young-adult novels. She often speaks at NCTE and ALA on the subject of reluctant readers. Her My Life series is illustrated by her teenage son and features a child with reading disabilities. *Einstein the Class Hamster's* use of Tasty Tidbits is a fun way to introduce and integrate nonfiction topics into the classroom. She has spoken to thousands of students during her two decades of school visits.

# INTRODUCTION

*Einstein the Class Hamster* is an engaging book for students who enjoy learning new facts while reading a fun story with memorable characters. In this curriculum guide, you will find handouts that link directly to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in the Content Areas (CCSS). The Guide Notes for Handouts explicitly state which CCSS are being met through each activity. By choosing this book and engaging students in these activities, you are helping your students meet state standards as well as helping them develop a keen interest for information and opening discussions about what it means to be a good friend.

## GUIDE NOTES FOR HANDOUTS

### READING ACTIVITIES



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The CCSS call for students to read and respond to literary and informational texts. The activities outlined below support comprehension and higher level thinking about both types of content found in *Einstein*.

#### *Pictures and Words*

Use this handout while reading to support a conversation about how illustrations clarify information. Be sure to share with students that Jake Tashjian, *Einstein's* teenage illustrator, has been creating books with his mom for several years. Refer to the author/illustrator interview for more information on this. [CCSS R7]

#### *Vocabulary*

This handout helps students build their skills with context clues. Students select the best definition for the bolded word in each excerpt from the text and underline the context clues that help them select that definition. Students can also draw a picture for each word to help them remember its meaning. [CCSS L4]



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## Guess Who!

How does language influence characterization? The quotes on this handout give a sense of each character. Twinkles is sneaky and clever about getting food. Einstein is enthusiastic about facts. Ned is nervous and shy. Students can explore how Janet Tashjian uses language to show these characteristics.

### Answer Key:



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“I’ve got something caught between my teeth. Do you think you could check it out?” (Twinkles, page 33)



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“Well, it only takes TWO MONTHS to completely recycle a can into a new, usable one. That is one fun fact!” (Einstein, page 41)



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“Um . . . I have a plan for how we can ace the audition without Ms. Moreno, but it’s pretty hard to believe.” (Ned, page 63)

The activity at the bottom of the handout prompts students to be mindful of punctuation. The most obvious choice for students is the use of the exclamation point for Einstein. Go further and discuss why Twinkles is being sneaky to politely question Einstein about checking out his teeth rather than demanding it forcefully. Ned’s sentence includes ellipses where his name was removed. You may want to explain this. Also, consider what readers might think about Ned if the sentence were worded or punctuated differently. [CCSS R4, L1, L2, L3]

Extension: Students may choose different quotes from the book to use for another Guess Who! activity. They can share their quotes in pairs or in small groups and have their peers guess the speaker. Then they can discuss how the voice of the character enhances characterization.

## ***Responding to Challenges***

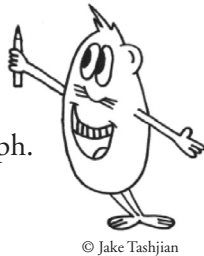
By the end of the story, Ned and Einstein have faced several obstacles together. This handout provides an opportunity to discuss overcoming challenges. Discuss the qualities that each character has to maintain in order to overcome his challenge.

Possible Answers:

- Einstein has to be flexible and teach the class through Ned. He sacrifices what he wants in order to be a good friend.
- Ned has to be brave in order to connect with his classmates by teaching the class even though he is nervous. [CCSS R3]

## **WRITING ACTIVITIES**

The CCSS call for three types of writing—opinion, narrative, and informative/explanatory. To help you and your students engage in the writing process, prewriting handouts for each type of writing are included in this curriculum guide. After students complete the prewriting handouts, they may develop a full paragraph. Use the handy revision handout to support revision/editing. Publishing options range from displaying written work in the classroom to creating media presentations, including illustrations and recorded voice.



### ***In My Opinion***

This writing activity provides students with an opportunity to write their opinion as to whether or not Ned should take Einstein to the game show. It is important for students to make a direct statement of belief followed by reasons to support their opinions. You may opt to use the prewriting handout to scaffold students' writing. You may also have students brainstorm reasons why Einstein should be able to go and why he should not. Encourage students to use linking words (because, therefore, since) in their writing. [CCSS W1]

### ***What Happens Next?***

Students write a narrative about what they think should happen next in the story. As opposed to the opinion piece above, here students develop a creative narrative describing events that follow the ending of the story. The prewriting handout encourages students to focus on feelings and details. You may also choose to focus on setting and developing dialogue. The initial words provided on the handout (first, then, after that, finally) encourage a sense of beginning, middle, and end. [CCSS W3]

### ***Research***

Einstein's Tasty Tidbits introduce students to topics that beg further exploration. Through research, students can build on the initial knowledge provided by the hamster. Remember that books are not the only sources of information. You may want to provide students with several sources in addition to books, such as online resources, video, and other people through asking questions or interviews. Remember that tests to measure students' ability will include varied sources of information (print and video). When examining print sources, discuss how to use various text features (headings, glossary, table of contents) to research efficiently. [CCSS W2, W7, W8, S&L 2]

### ***Revision***

Students can use the revision handout after drafting a paragraph for any of the three writing tasks above. Students read their work and consider whether it meets each of the elements on the checklist. They also add to the checklist based on class instruction and/or positive traits they recognize in their own writing or in model texts. [CCSS W5]





## GETTING TO KNOW AUTHOR JANET TASHJIAN AND ILLUSTRATOR JAKE TASHJIAN

### JANET AND JAKE INTERVIEW EACH OTHER (WHILE EINSTEIN TAKES NOTES)

**JANET:** Because I'm the writer and you're the illustrator, I bet people think *Einstein* was my idea, but it was actually yours. Tell our readers how *Einstein the Class Hamster* came into being.

**JAKE:** When I was in middle school, I created a daily comic strip about a kid with a sarcastic pet hamster. People thought it was funny, and you and I started playing around with the idea of making it a book. First his name was Martin, then Dennis, then Zach until you finally came up with Einstein. We also made him a class hamster that no one could hear except Ned.

**JANET:** You really worked hard on these illustrations; they're very different from the stick figures in the *My Life* novels.

**JAKE:** My friend John, who's an amazing animator, worked with me on character design. I spent a zillion hours creating the look of Einstein and his friends. It's really important to be consistent. Einstein can't look different from one drawing to the next. I learned a lot about illustrating by doing this book.

**JANET:** Einstein talks about how important it is for Ned to be a reliable friend. You and I had to rely on each other a lot during this collaboration, don't you think?

**JAKE:** You wrote the story first. Then I did the illustrations. But we really collaborated on what scenes should be illustrated and how to make each drawing as funny as it could be. We also had a lot of conversations about Ms. Moreno, Principal Decker, as well as Ned, Bonnie, and Ricky. They changed a lot from my first idea of them to how they ended up.

**JANET:** And of course Twinkles and Marlon.

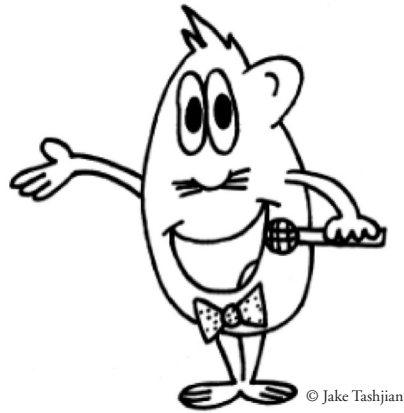
**JAKE:** I love that snake and crazy turtle. And we can't ignore another one of my ideas—this is the first book ever to have bloopers and deleted scenes.

**JANET:** I'm so glad I listened to you; that was a great idea! Do you want to tell our readers about *Einstein 2* and *3*?

**JAKE:** In *Einstein 2*, Ned sneaks Einstein onto the set of a real game show, which is Einstein's dream come true. *Einstein 3* is called *Einstein Saves the Library*. He can't imagine a world without libraries, and neither can I!

# PICTURES AND WORDS

Pictures can help  
make the words on  
the page easier to  
understand.



An important picture in this book is on page \_\_\_\_\_ .

This picture helped me understand the story better by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

## YOUR TURN!

Draw your own illustration for another part of the book.

A large empty rectangular box for drawing an illustration.

This is an illustration of \_\_\_\_\_ .

Two important details in this illustration are:

Detail 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Detail 2 \_\_\_\_\_

I used these details because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .



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## VOCABULARY

Select the best choice from the list below to complete Einstein's definition of each bolded word. Underline the context clues that helped you choose your definition.

**discourage**      **greedily eat**  
**dependable**      **scary**

1. But Einstein had to give Twinkles credit: He didn't just attempt to gobble Einstein up; the snake was creative in the ways he tried to **devour** him.

Devour means \_\_\_\_\_

2. Einstein didn't let Marlon **deter** him. He KNEW his show was good.

Deter means \_\_\_\_\_

3. "Be right there!" Ned called from his locker. "I wouldn't let you down."  
Einstein smiled at his buddy. It was nice having a **reliable** friend.

Reliable means \_\_\_\_\_

4. Without Principal Decker parading the python around, Twinkles seemed much less **menacing**, until he saw Einstein hiding behind the ant farm. Twinkles shot him a GET OFF MY TURF look that had Einstein scurrying through the tunnel system to the safety of his tank.

Menacing means \_\_\_\_\_



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Draw a picture to help you remember the meaning of each word.

**Devour**

**Deter**

**Reliable**

**Menacing**



# GUESS WHO!

Circle the name of the character who said the following. Then explain what the sentences reveal about the character.

1. "I've got something caught between my teeth. Do you think you could check it out?"

Einstein



Twinkles



Ned



These sentences show that this character is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_.

2. "Well, it only takes TWO MONTHS to completely recycle a can into a new, usable one. That is one fun fact!"

Einstein



Twinkles



Ned



These sentences show that this character is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_.

3. "Um . . . I have a plan for how we can ace the audition without Ms. Moreno, but it's pretty hard to believe."

Einstein



Twinkles



Ned



These sentences show that this character is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_.

## Punctuation

Circle the punctuation in each sentence above. Choose one sentence and tell how the punctuation helps make the character's feelings clear.

The \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_'s sentence

helps me understand that \_\_\_\_\_.

# RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES

Write about how Einstein and Ned respond to challenges they face in the book. Then tell how YOU have responded to a challenge. Illustrate one of the responses on a separate paper.

**Einstein faces a challenge. He wants to teach the class even though they cannot hear him when he talks.**

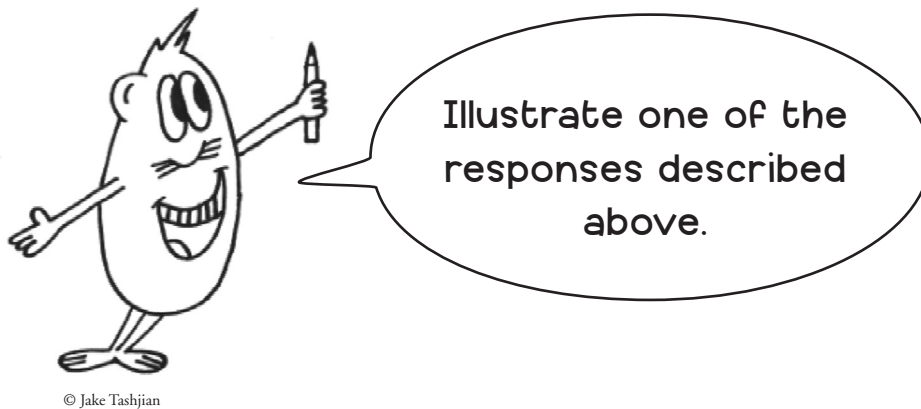
Einstein responds to this challenge by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Ned faces a challenge. It is difficult for him to make friends.**

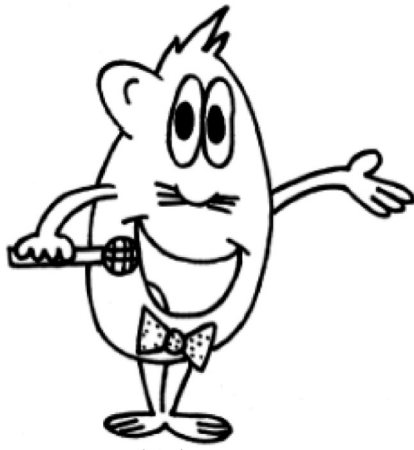
Ned responds to this challenge by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**A challenge I have faced is** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I responded to this challenge by \_\_\_\_\_.



## IN MY OPINION



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A great way to  
support your opinion  
is by using **FACTS!**

Should Ned take Einstein to the game show? State your opinion and support your opinion with at least two reasons.

**Circle your choice:**

I think that Ned **should** **should not** take Einstein to the game show.

One reason is \_\_\_\_\_

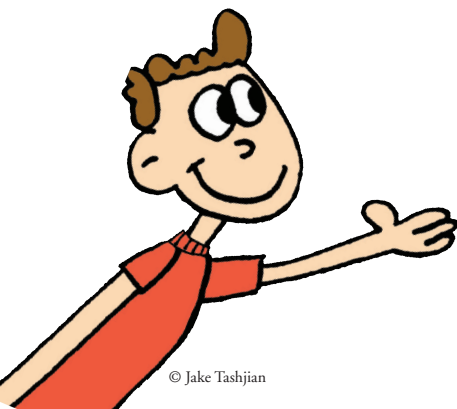
\_\_\_\_\_

Another reason is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These reasons are important because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

What do you want to happen next? Plan your own story in four parts by drawing in the boxes below and writing a caption for each drawing. Tell the details and feelings that are important for each part of your story.

**First**

Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

What details need to be in this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the characters feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

**Then**

Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

What details need to be in this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the characters feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

## **After That**

Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

What details need to be in this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the characters feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Finally**

Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

What details need to be in this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the characters feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

# RESEARCH

Read another book about a topic in Tasty Tidbits. List the new information that you find.

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

List THREE questions  
that you still want to  
answer on this totally  
AWESOME topic!



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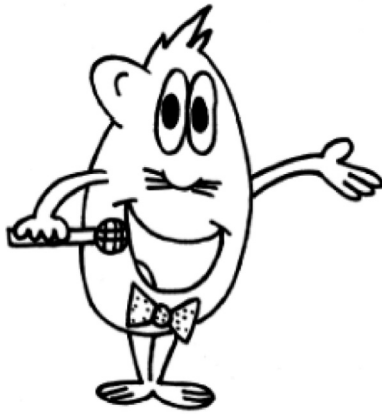
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Einstein taught me . . .**

**My new book taught me . . .**



# REVISION



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It is always important to review what you write. Try reading your writing out loud. That way you can hear how it sounds.

Double check your writing! Place a checkmark next to each of the following if you think your writing includes:

- \_\_\_\_\_ A topic sentence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Strong reasons and details
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clear and descriptive language
- \_\_\_\_\_ A concluding sentence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Word variety
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accurate punctuation

What else could be on our checklist? Add something you think is important to look for.

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