Gram & Gran Save the Summer

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TEACHER Goals

About Gram and Gran

We're long-time friends who began writing a book together when they were in high school. You know how life goes, one minute you're consuming Mountain Dew in your buddy's basement, and the next thing you know it's: *Work! Responsibilities! A family of your own!* A few decades later, we were ready to return to the project, now as award-winning educators with four decades of experience teaching and leading English, journalism, and media. Writing *Gram and Gran* was a labor of love and a labor of fun: a chance to nerd out on exciting ideas every chance we got.

But enough about us. You want to know why we wrote *Gram and Gran*, right? Put simply, we couldn't find any other book out there like it. We wanted to create something that captured kids' imaginations and taught media literacy concepts that are too often left for the upper reaches of high school. Why should we act like our students aren't ready to learn this stuff when they're already online? We wanted to provide something better for this next generation -- both for our kids and yours.

Thanks for joining us!

Steve & Dan

02 Key Terms and Definitions

Algorithms are any process or set of rules a computer follows from its code. An algorithm chooses which links to show in search engines and in what order. On social media sites, an algorithm often chooses what posts users see. But algorithms can introduce a type of bias, since the results are often tailored to what the algorithm decides the user wants instead of showing many different points of view.

Bias means showing favoritism toward something, for example, a group or an idea. All people have biases. That means all sources do, too. If we're not careful, bias can skew information and make it untrustworthy. That's why the most reliable sources try to avoid as much bias as they can.

Claims are arguments that people make about the world or any aspect of it. But a claim is just a statement. It can be true, false, or anywhere in between. The more a claim is supported by facts and evidence, the more credible it is.

Common wisdom is things that people repeat that may or may not be true. Just because people agree that something is correct doesn't mean it necessarily is. If you're not sure, ask for proof or evidence.

Credibility means trustworthiness or believability.

Engagement is when viewers keep reading a site and interacting with it. Social media platforms prioritize engagement because it's how they make money. They want users to stick around, so they show as much content as they can that will keep people engaged, regardless of whether it is credible or makes people upset.

Evidence is the facts or research that support a claim. Facts are different from opinions since opinions can't really be proven true or false. Facts are 100% checkable, and without facts to back them up, opinions are mainly just hot air.

Expertise means a person is especially knowledgeable about a certain topic. They may research it, for example. However, expertise in one area does not mean a person has expertise in any other area.

Independent verification means confirming that something is true by finding separate, reliable sources that say the same thing. See lateral reading.

Lateral reading is a fancy name for checking other sites to see if what a website says is true or if a source is reputable. When you aren't sure about information, look for other, trustworthy sources of information that back up the site you're on. You can also look up any source to see if it's considered trustworthy. See independent verification.

Mainstream media are newspapers, websites, and television channels that have been around for a long time and are where most people get their news. That doesn't mean they never make mistakes or exhibit bias, but they have a long track record that readers can consider.

Newsfeed bias can occur when you're presented with the same information over and over again by an algorithm, regardless of whether it's true. This means we cannot rely solely on our social newsfeeds for actual news since they may be serving us plausible lies to keep us on the platform. We'll need to look for independent verification from credible sources.

Parody is a creative work that exaggerates something to poke fun at it.

Phishing occurs when someone sends an email to trick a person into giving away their personal information – such as a password or credit card information. It can lead to theft or other scams. See spear phishing.

Reliable sources are sources that have proved, over time, that the information they provide is likely to be trustworthy.

Skepticism means doubting things are true until you can be sure of it. Taking a skeptical stance on surprising or contradictory information is helpful because it'll encourage you to do your homework and check things out for yourself.

Spear phishing is a type of phishing when someone has researched you to better impersonate a person or group you trust—to try to get you to send them personal information. See phishing.

03 *Universal Lesson Plan*

Gram and Gran is designed to start conversations around crucial media literacy principles, allowing it to be easily used by teachers in the classroom or parents in the home. Each chapter follows a similar structure:

- The mystery (a challenge students need to solve using media literacy skills)
- A clue from a character
- The conclusion (which reveals the solution to the chapter's challenge)

With the exception of the last chapter, which spirals back to previously learned skills, each chapter can be isolated to focus on a specific media literacy concept. That said, there is an overarching narrative, and we recommend reading the chapters in order.

Because chapters maintain a similar approach, the following simple lesson structure can be used with students.

Read	❖ If you are mid-way through the book, begin by asking students to name what has happened in the story so far. Ask students to recall any key media literacy ideas they've studied in previous chapters and/or define any terms you think will be helpful for the upcoming chapter. o Note: These are **boldfaced** in the book. This guide provides a glossary you can share with students as a further support. ❖ In class or for homework, read the first part of the chapter, up to the clue. Reading can be done independently or as a read aloud.
Small-Group Discussion	❖ Each chapter ends with a question. Break students into small groups to discuss the chapter's question and propose their solution. o Note: In most chapters, no additional resource is needed beyond a copy of the book. On occasion, however, students may benefit from being able to use the internet on a particular chapter quest, though this isn't strictly required. ❖ After a few minutes of discussion, direct groups to read the character hint (or read it out loud yourself) and ask them to decide if it supports or challenges their conclusion. Provide additional time for group thinking.
Whole-Group Discussion	❖ Open the floor to the whole class for opinions and commentary on the chapter's mystery. Ask them to use any key **boldfaced** vocabulary from the chapter hint as they talk. ❖ Use the media literacy skill blurb in the chapter guide to help clarify or sharpen the class's conclusions once students have arrived at their analysis. ❖ If desired, extend conversation using the discussion questions in this guide.
Closure	❖ Read the conclusion of the chapter with students. If students had a different solution, compare theirs to the chapter and discuss whether theirs is equally plausible, better, or something they now want to revise. ❖ Ask them to name their key take-aways: "So what should we remember going forward and why?" o Note: This prompt can be used as a written as exit ticket, following discussion.

04 Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Gram and Gran

Synopsis

After Nia, D'Angelo and Deja's summer camp must close, they learn they'll be spending the summer with their Gram and Gran – two figures they barely know who live on Barnaby's Corner, a tiny island off the coast of Maine. Their mom is hoping they'll have a screen-free summer, but to their surprise, the island is dominated by a giant skyscraper that gives free, hyperfast Wi-Fi to all, making it the most connected place on the planet. The inventor who built it? Vanished. And as for Gram and Gran? They're more than a little bizarre. Confusion ensues when both grandparents claim to be the one called "Gram."

Media Literacy Skill: Credibility and Reliable Sources

When something says something odd, surprising, or downright fishy, we need a way to determine which **claims** are true and which are not. A good starting point involves looking for **reliable sources**. Reliable sources are **credible**—that is, we're reasonably confident we can believe what they say. If you aren't sure about the credibility of a source, what can you do? Reliable sources tend to have a track record of having been truthful and trustworthy in the past. A newspaper that always gets it right and runs corrections on the few occasions it makes a mistake is reliable. A random post on the Internet without any clear author or source? Not so much. When we're in doubt, we should use what we know from reliable sources to help us make sense of things.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. Mom seems to think that walling her children off from the internet will protect them. Do you agree?

2. D'Angelo thinks he's solved the mystery by using his gut instincts, and that's true—in part. But how does he use reliable sources to help him solve the case?

3. There are so many sources online, it's hard to know which ones are credible and which ones aren't. If you weren't sure, what could you do?

Chapter 2 – So They Say

Synopsis

The kids begin to settle into Gram and Gran's apartment at the top of "the Tower," a giant, green skyscraper that their grandparents somehow live in. Gram mistakes Deja's allergies for a cold and bundles her up – but it's the middle of the summer! Undaunted, Gram and Gran cite the homespun wisdom of Constance B. Theymselves (and her yappy terrier) – the biggest social media stars on Barnaby's Corner. Constance's channel – "So They Say" sure does seem authoritative. But can her advice be trusted? (And why did Gram just put a rooster in Deja's bed?!?)

Media Literacy Skill: Supporting Claims with Evidence

One way we can consider if a source is **reliable** is whether they can support what they say with evidence from other reliable sources. But that's not always the case. Often, you might hear people reference vague arguments ("well you know what they say") without any support. Even things people say all the time aren't necessarily true. When it's important, and you're not sure, it never hurts to ask for evidence or look for some yourself. You might be surprised at what you find!

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. There's an old saying: "common sense is what tells us the Earth is flat." Why should we be skeptical when people cite common wisdom as a source for information or advice?

2. In this chapter, one of the Tower's residents is getting bossed around by his Babel3000, a parody of some of the digital "assistants" that are available to help people manage their lives. **Parodies** work by exaggerating something until it's silly or comical. What is being exaggerated about the way these devices work? Do you think they're a bit silly? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

3. Constance sure is confident about the things she says in this chapter. What's the danger in just trusting that confident-sounding people know what they are talking about?

Chapter 3 – The Museum of the Misunderstood

Synopsis

Nia and D'Angelo go out on the island searching for adventure, but instead get roped into helping curate the strangest exhibits in a place called The Museum of the Misunderstood. The trouble is, some of the newest ones are filled with falsehoods. D'Angelo tries to use his "bull pucky" detector to speed through: surely, the weird exhibits about cats delivering mail or animals being put on trial are made up, while the ones about Vikings and the dark side of the moon are true, right? But all may not be as it seems.

Media Literacy Skill: Verifying Information

In the first two chapters, we saw the value of seeking out credible information from reliable sources—and not just relying on people's **claims** (even if they sound confident!). But how exactly can we be sure? In this chapter, Nia and D'Angelo see that using our guts alone is not the best call. Instead, one of the best approaches is to seek out **independent verification**: separate, reliable sources that back up what a person is claiming. The bigger and wilder the claim, the more important it is that we do this. One approach online is called **lateral reading**, which essentially just means looking at other, separate sites to double check the information we're being presented.

Here's the kicker: this isn't just about what we see online. It's so easy to think we know something for sure that we've never actually checked. The bigger and more wild the claim someone makes, the more it needs proof… even if that someone is us!

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. Duckle, Bugosaurus, and Grind_Wizard call Nia and D'Angelo holograms and say that people online aren't "real." Do they have a point? Why or why not?

2. D'Angelo's gut was able to help him solve the mystery in chapter 1. Why isn't it enough right now?

3. Nia and D'Angelo get fooled by how professional the exhibits look. What's the danger of just relying on appearances?

4. After getting tricked, D'Angelo decides he'll trust nothing. Is that a good approach to information? Why?

5. In their book *Verified*, experts Mike Caulfield and Sam Wineburg suggest that first step to media literacy is asking yourself: do I know what I'm looking at? A lot of the time, the answer is that we do not – and some research will be needed. That's what happened to D'Angelo and Nia in this chapter. Why do you think this step is so hard for people?

6. Your friend tells you with confidence that the 100 Years War lasted 116 Years and the Thirty Years War lasted 35 years. You haven't heard that before, it's a bit surprising. What do you respond? (Feel free check online!)

Chapter 4 – The Reviews are In

Synopsis

Gram and Gran may be odd, but at least they appreciate the value of a good meal. While Gran orders the same thing every time (extra crispy bacon-jalapeno-cheddar-gorgonzola poppers), Gram seeks out the weirdest things on the menu – like grass juice served from an open-toed boot. But after promising to take Nia to try a new French food restaurant, the group's plans appear thwarted when Gram reads a bunch of negative reviews in her crowdsourced app. D'Angelo, however, smells something fishy. Can readers help him scrutinize these online reviews?

Media Literacy Skill: Spotting Bias

Bias means showing favoritism toward something, for example a group or an idea. Everyone has biases toward one thing or another, and most are harmless. For example, you might like summer much more than winter, so you move to a place that stays warm most of the year. It's a bias, but it's not hurting anyone.

Bias, however, can sometimes lead people to skew information or only tell one side of the story. When we read anything, we need to think about whether the author has a certain perspective or whether the writing demonstrates bias. Most serious news outlets do their best to avoid this in their coverage, but the average website makes no promises. A site needs to earn your trust by being consistently accurate and fair. When we read information, we need to ask ourselves: who created this? What's their perspective? Do they have any incentive to skew the facts?

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. In this chapter, the site NoshMonster encouraged Gram to try new foods, but it also was used to unfairly attack a new restaurant. How can the internet bring out both the best and worst in people at the same time?

2. Monterey Jack claims his restaurant is authentic, or true to the culture and style of Italian cuisine. What evidence in the chapter might lead you to conclude that his restaurant is not as authentic as he claims?

3. Try this for yourself! Generate two short reviews of the school cafeteria or a restaurant you've been to: one that tries to be fair, the other that contains a heavy bias (either in favor of the restaurant or against it). What are the differences?

Chapter 5 – Gran's Special Medicine

Synopsis

Gran reminisces about the time he was younger and taller, but he has a solution now – medicine he found online that claims it can help him grow. The only problem: it makes him dreadfully, uproariously gassy. Nia suspects the site – and its proprietor Dr. Asmodeus P. Hornswoggle – is running some sort of scam. We learn a bit more about how Gram and Gran came to be in the Tower and meet its secret computer room. And Nia tries to show Gran why all the "experts" he cites don't really have standing to endorse his growth pills.

Media Literacy Skill: Evaluating Expertise

We're all told we should "trust the experts," but being an expert in one thing doesn't necessarily make someone an expert in all things. In fact, it's often quite the opposite! You might trust your pediatrician for medical advice, but you should think twice before trusting them with how to design a building or fly a plane. **Expertise** is specific to certain topics. Sometimes, however, people like to cite experts in one field to trick people into thinking they are credible sources about anything. Don't be fooled. Biologists know about biology. Politicians know about policy. Taxidermists know about taxidermy. But that doesn't mean any of them necessarily knows about nutrition or wellness or farming. Experts' **claims** are only useful if they actually have expertise on the specific subject they are talking about!

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. Nia points out that anyone could put the word "doctor" in front of their name online. Based on what you've learned in other chapters, what might Gran have done to check on the credibility of Dr. Hornswoggle before buying his products?

2. In the last chapter, you read about bias. Based on what you've learned about Dr. Hornswoggle and Verticol, are there any biases you think his site might have?

3. For research to be valid, it needs to be tested many, many times so that people know the first results weren't just by chance. Even if every expert on the Verticol site were trustworthy, look at this line again. Does it inspire confidence for you? Why or why not?

> *In fact, a recent study being conducted by Dr. Hornswoggle's MacGuffin Institute shows promising early results that Verticol might help test subjects gain 2.5 inches in height.*

4. Gran assumes that celebrities automatically know more than him. Is that true? What would you tell him about this belief?

Chapter 6 – Reliable Sources

Synopsis

As far back as D'Angelo and Nia can recall, Deja has always had a cause. Now she's trying to convince Gram and Gran to donate to a "SaveOurSharks" charity she found online. She shows them the flashy website and everything. Meanwhile, the kids venture out into Barnaby's Corner to locate Ruthbert Rugglesford, the resident who submitted the deceptive exhibits to the museum. But rather than feel bad he was caught telling lies, Ruthbert apologizes that his lies weren't good enough and promises to do better. In fact, he's got a new scam running about sharks…

Media Literacy Skill: Assessing Websites

Here's where we can put together a number of the skills learned in previous chapters. We're aware of **bias** as well as the need to fact check **claims** and sources when we're surprised or unsure. This comes together when we're on the internet, looking at the possible sources out there. In the early days, many people would say to just check if the site was a .org or to closely read its "about" page. That's bad practice, though, since people who are looking to misrepresent themselves can easily buy a .org domain or write a misleading "about" page. We have three approaches that help. We've already discussed **reading laterally** and checking on sources. Another is to be on the lookout for the deceptive bells and whistles someone might use to make a site look more reputable than it is.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. SaveOurSharks *looks* really slick and polished. Why isn't that enough to tell if a site is trustworthy?

2. Media literacy expert Mike Caulfield has recommended that people use an approach called SIFT to assess websites:

- Stop and ask if what your really know about a source and what it's claiming.
- Investigate the source to see if it's trustworthy.
- Find other coverage of the topic for reputable organizations.
- Trace the information to its original context.

Why can't readers just use their guts? If a site is a .org and looks really slick, isn't that enough?

3. Let's try to determine if a site is reliable ourselves. Every year, Steve (one of the authors of Gram and Gran) would make the following pitch to the school newspaper editorial board, which operated from his journalism class:

> *Team, I wanted to let you know that I'm able to 100% confirm that the compound DHMO is present in our school building. In fact, it has been found in multiple rooms! Last year's editorial board didn't choose to cover this, but it's a free tip if you'd like to consider it. You can find all the information at dhmo.org.*

Would you cover the story? Why or why not?   [We encourage you to check out the site!]

Chapter 7 – Gone Phishing

Synopsis

Once Ruthbert learns that the kids live with Gram and Gran at the top of the Tower, he becomes especially interested in being their friends. To apologize for the "mixup" earlier, he promises to take them out fishing. But when they get out on the water, he pulls out laptops instead of fishing rods, since – as the president and only member of the Villainous Society for a Better World – he wants to show the kids how to phish for passwords. (And he's particularly interested in getting a password for the Tower, oddly.) Can Gram and Gran spot his tricks and avoid the scam?

Media Literacy Skill: Avoiding Phishing

In general, it's smart to read emails "on the defense," as Gram says—especially if they're trying to get you to click on something. **Phishing** occurs when someone sends an email to try to trick a person to give away their personal information – such as a password or credit card information. One click can lead you to a site designed to steal your personal data, and that opens the door to theft or other scams. **Spear phishing** is even sneakier since the sender might have done research about you to help them seem like a trusted contact. The good news is that, in addition to holding off on clicking email links if you don't recognize the sender, you can watch for a few telltale signs of phishing operations: spelling errors, grammar mistakes, weird sender names, or just surprising topics and strange logic.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. This chapter includes another **parody**—this time of in-app purchases. Is the "I Spy" game really free, as Ruthbert claims? What does that scene poke fun at?

2. Not every junk email you receive is an example of phishing, but why is it helpful to have a defensive posture when checking your inbox, especially if someone asks you to click on a link?

3. Even though it's possible for hackers to send extremely sophisticated phishing emails, a lot of the ones people receive are simple to spot as scams. But if that's the case, why do you think adults keep getting tricked?

4. Imagine you're the head of the IT department at your company. You've been asked to make a pamphlet, video, or poster helping employees avoid phishing—and you know the adults have been tricked in the past! What would you make sure to include?

5. At the end of the chapter, Gran announces that he and Gram are un-foolable and immune to scams. Do you agree? What might you say to Gran in response?

Chapter 8 – Cherry Picking

Synopsis

Hoping to make up for the disaster that was his phishing trip, Ruthbert takes the kids cherry picking at the local orchard. As they converse, he tells them all about the toothpaste he invented (which turns out to be entirely sugar). Unfortunately, he sells it by cherry picking facts (e.g., it wins a lot of taste tests!). In fact, Ruthbert sings a song about how he wins all his arguments and debates by cherry picking facts. Hoping to thwart his bad behavior, Nia challenges him to a showdown. Can she poke holes in his arguments?

Media Literacy Skill: Spotting and Stopping Cherry Picking

As we've seen, there are lots of ways bad information can spread online: by deceptive sites, biased accounts, or even a newsfeed that keeps repeating the same thing over and over. A particularly sneaky technique is **cherry picking**, since it doesn't technically involve lying. When people cherry pick information, they choose only facts that support their case—and then ignore all the others. That creates a lopsided account, and often one that is extremely misleading. Even if it's not directly lying, cherry picking is dishonest. The best way to prevent it is to do your own research and call it out when you see it.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. The fake meme RACECAR CRAB TAKES THE FLAG is an example of **parody** in this chapter. But what's the joke? What might the authors be teasing about the way people use memes? (Extra credit: Just for fun, design what this meme might look like and explain what it would mean, in your view.)

2. In his song, Ruthbert claims that he doesn't need to "fib, lie, or deceive" if he's just cherry picking his facts. Is that actually true? Cherry picking does not involve outright lying, but would you say it's truthful?

3. Let's think about cherry-picking in action. Design two version of a box of sugary cereal. The first version should cherry pick information to make the cereal look as good as possible. The second should report all the information, both good and bad. Some facts to consider: The cereal is delicious and it's fortified with 11 essential vitamins and minerals. The cereal has to be fortified because its naturally unhealthy.The cereal is delicious and kids love it. The cereal will damage your teeth and is loaded with 39 grams of sugar to make it taste sweet. The cereal is "a great way to start your day!" Eating almost anything could be called "a great way to start your day."

Chapter 9 – Conspiracies A Go-Go

Synopsis

What begins as some bonding time for Gran and D'Angelo takes an argumentative turn when D'Angelo cites his social media newsfeed, which taught him that aliens built the pyramids. Desperate to save the day, Gran takes D'Angelo to Universe of Diversion, the local amusement park, but to D'Angelo's shock the only game offered there is ring toss and Gran doesn't understand why that's a problem. They wind up back in the secret computer room, hoping they can find out how ring toss became the only game in town. Can D'Angelo explain to Gran what's wrong with the park? And can Gran help D'Angelo see the dangers of only relying on his newsfeed?

Media Literacy Skill: Newsfeed Bias

We've talked about the power of analyzing single sites or emails for bias or deception, but what do you do when you're faced with a lot of articles all saying the same thing? That can happen with **newsfeed bias**, since the posts you might see on a social media site are controlled by a computer program (or **algorithm**) that just wants to keep **engagement** high. It seems like you're looking at multiple sources, but in reality you're just being fed information the algorithm knows you'll click on – and in many cases it doesn't care one bit whether that information is true or not. That means you can't rely on your social feed for all your news: you need to break the bubble and look to outside, credible sources to make sure you're getting a balanced picture of the world.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1.   Imagine if D'Angelo had typed "Did aliens build the pyramids?" into a search engine after seeing it on his feed. Overall, what might his results have told him?

2.   What would have happened if D'Angelo had done some lateral reading and looked up the news sources from his feed? What would he likely have learned?

3.   Back in Chapter 3, Phineas shares a journalism saying: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out." What does that mean? And how would taking a more skeptical stance help D'Angelo keep from getting caught up in newsfeed bias?

4.   The mainstream media, like any media, are susceptible to bias. But mainstream media tend to quickly correct mistakes they makes because most companies' brands are based on getting things right. That doesn't make them perfect, but why is that better than a site that never runs corrections and just moves on?

5.   D'Angelo says that newsfeed bias is "like cherry picking, but supersized." What does he mean? Bonus: why does D'Angelo suggest to Gran that he look at media sites beyond those in the U.S.?

Chapter 10 – Pure Puffery

Synopsis

Ruthbert, sensing his credibility slipping, tries to make up for his misadventures by inviting the whole family out on a hot air balloon ride. He has brochures from the balloon company assuring everyone that the safety features are the best in the world. But when the balloon begins to fall apart in mid-air, the family gets a very abrupt lesson in puffery in advertising. When companies claim they have the "world's best coffee," is that OK? And if it is, how can we avoid getting tricked? Also, can anyone land this balloon before it falls apart?

Media Literacy Skill: Scrutinizing Puffery in Ads

It's strange, but true: companies can legally lie to you in advertisements and articles. The legal term really is **puffery**, and the rules are simple: (1) What they say must be so exaggerated that it would be difficult to believe and (2) What they say can't make any specific claims; it can only make general claims of superiority. When you're looking for puffery, it can help to look for words like "best," "most," and "strongest," which make the product sound superior, as well as descriptions like "famous," "world-renowned," and "trusted," which sound like they're claims of quality but don't actually tell you who feels that way. Specific endorsements or claims about a product are less likely to be puffery.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. Ruthbert notes that puffery is just a part of advertising. At the same time, many ads tell the truth because they want to earn consumers' trust. So how should people approach the information they hear in advertising?

2. In the movie *Elf*, Buddy is excited when he walks past a Manhattan coffee shop with the sign "world's best cup of coffee ." He rushes in and shouts, "You did it! Congratulations!" What's going on here? What doesn't Buddy understand?
   - You can likely find this video on YouTube: search "Elf greatest coffee"
   - If you'd like to study more about puffery, you might also search: "Cheddar lies advertisers can legally tell"

3. Imagine Monterey Jack (from Chapter 3) wants to do a sales campaign for his store: "Monterey Jack's Totally Authentic 100% Real and Certainly Not Bogus Italian Restaurant and Cheese-arium." The ad reads: "The freshest ingredients, the finest recipes, the most professional staff and the best darned restaurant in all of the U.S.A. – visit the Cheese-arium!"
   - Imagine you are his lawyer. Is this legal? What advice would you give?
   - Now imagine you are this friend. Is this this right thing to do? What advice would you give?

Chapter 11 – Gram and Gran Save the Summer

Synopsis

Ruthbert's designs on the Tower are finally revealed – as is the fate of its inventor, Barnaby Babel – kicking off a fast-paced race in which the kids must prevent him from uploading an algorithm to the Internet that may well destroy it. To do this, the kids will need to use the skills they've gathered from previous chapters to solve a series of challenges. Can the family save summer (and possibly, also, the world)?

Media Literacy Skill: Review of Previous Skills

This chapter spirals review of skills that were learned in earlier chapters. It's an opportunity to help students recall what they have learned and thought about while reading the book.

Extension and Discussion Questions

1. You might turn this final chapter into a bit of a competition, splitting your room into teams who need to solve each of the challenges in the chapter. Once they correctly solve a challenge, offer them the next section of the chapter to read.

2. Ruthbert is what you might call a sympathetic antagonist. Even though he's doing things that are wrong, we can understand and sympathize with his perspective. What's Ruthbert's complaint about the internet? How do the characters respond? Do you agree? Would you add anything?

3. We've talked a lot about media literacy, but this is a book where a lot of characters grow, both kids and adults. Choose a character in the text and describe how they change during the course of the story.

4. Think back across the various puzzles and solutions in the book. What 1-2 things most influenced the way you'll look at information in the future? What would you want to share with a friend or younger student who knows less than you?

05 *Illustrations!*

Here are some of the illustrations and early concept art for Gram and Gran, *created by our fantastic Illustrator Louis Decrevel!*

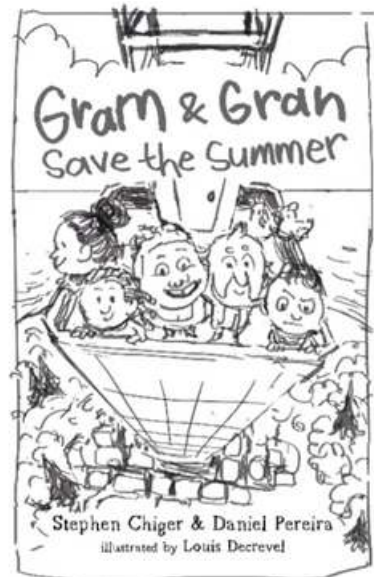Deja   D'Angelo   Nia

Phineas Paperplate

Gram & Gran

The PII Kids

Ruthbert Rugglesford

Ruthbert Rugglesford: initial concept art

Cover design: initial sketches

06 *Further Exploration*

The National Association for Media Literacy Education defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication." That means it's a huge, interdisciplinary topic, concerned with creating multiple types media as well as decoding them. Understanding the forces shaping these communications, as well as how to build or enjoy healthy relationships with media ourselves, is a lifelong project – impossible to contain to a single grade or unit. (Or even a really lovely and whimsical adventure.)

Gram and Gran seeks to teach some foundational habits of mind so students can critically engage with media as they encounter it in their own lives. For parents and educators who are looking to extend this learning in structured ways, there are tons of websites with free lessons and activities designed to support. Keep in mind that the best way to support students is not in isolation but applied to a broader narrative of learning: either woven into a larger curriculum or in response to their own curiosity and questions.

Site	Publisher	Grades served
News and Media Literacy 101 – https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/news-media-literacy-101	Common Sense Media	K+
Digital Citizenship Curriculum – https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/curriculum	Common Sense Media	K+
Lessons and Resources – https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/find-lesson	MediaSmarts	K+
NewseumED - https://newseumed.org/search/?type=lesson	The Freedom Forum Institute	3+
Checkology – https://get.checkology.org/	The News Literacy Project	6+
ReadWriteThink – https://www.readwritethink.org/collections/media-literacy	National Council of Teachers of English	6+
Civic Online Reasoning – https://cor.inquirygroup.org/curriculum/	Digital Inquiry Group (formerly The Stanford History Education Group)	6+

Thank you

Interested in a virtual or live visit?

Want to do a read aloud or Q&A with your students?

Let us know!

Contact information below.

07 Contact Us

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TEACHER *Goals*