

Dear Educator,

Stuart Gibbs, author of the popular and well-loved Spy School series, presents a wonderful host of imaginative and witty characters in his highly illustrated book series, *Once Upon a Tim*. In this humorous tale set in the Middle Ages, readers meet Tim, a young boy who wasn't born a prince but still dreams of becoming a knight. Together with his best friend Belinda and faithful fr-dog Rover (an enchanted pet in the unlikely combination of frog and dog), Tim sets out on a daunting quest filled with menacing beasts and cranky ogres, along with a few less than trusty humans.

Inspire your students with Tim's sense of adventure and reinforce narrative writing skills with these engaging classroom activities from Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired. From character development to story sequencing to building descriptive details, these materials provide a mini-creative writing unit with special Writers' Workshop components for each activity. The *Once Upon a Tim* series provides humorous, illustrated storytelling that many young readers will enjoy. Students do not have to complete the books to use these activities.

Feel free to share this program with other teachers in your school. Please let us know your thoughts on the program by returning the enclosed reply card, or by commenting at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-onceuponatim. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

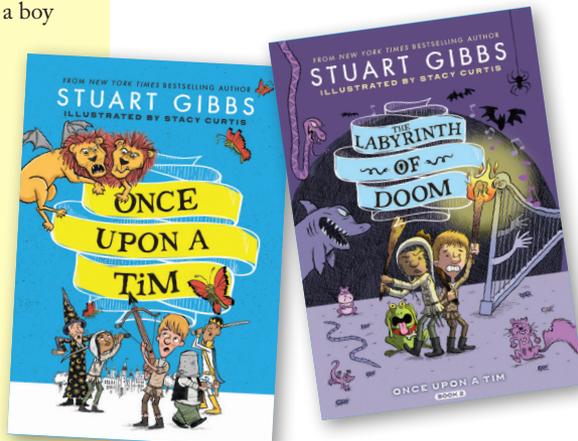


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For questions, contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.

About the Series

Once Upon a Tim is a highly illustrated middle grade series from *New York Times* bestselling author Stuart Gibbs. Tim is a boy with big dreams. When an unlikely opportunity to rescue a princess presents itself, Tim and his best friend Belinda embark on a treacherous quest where they encounter dangerous beasts, angry ogres, and very devious humans. The only path to success in the Kingdom of Wyld is to be born a prince, but there has never been a hero like Tim before. *The Labyrinth of Doom*, book two in the *Once Upon a Tim* series, is now available.



Target Audience

Students in grades 3-5

Program Components

Included in this poster guide:

- A classroom wall poster
- This teacher's guide
- Three reproducible activity sheets
- A reply card for your comments

These components are also available at ymiclassroom.com/onceuponatim, along with a reproducible Writer's Guide Handout, standards alignment chart, and an online feedback form.

Program Objectives

- Support language and literacy skills
- Strengthen narrative writing skills, including character development, sequencing, and descriptive details
- Encourage independent reading

How to Use the Poster

Before hanging up the wall poster, photocopy the teacher's guide and three activity sheets. Use the Vocabulary Booster section of the poster and the Writer's Guide Handout to have some fun with words as a warm-up. Have students make up their own humorous new words or research unusual synonyms for common terms. Use the words they find for a fun vocabulary quiz.

Activity 1: Dream Big

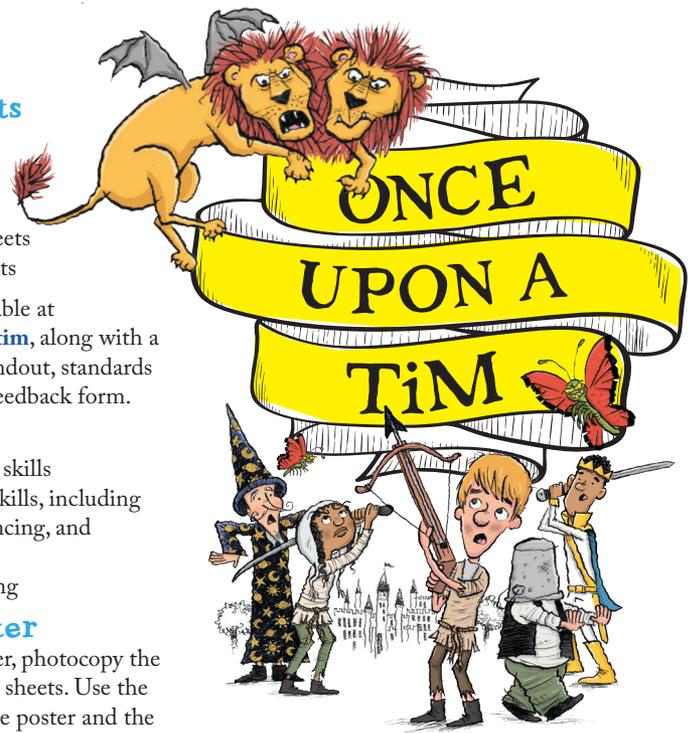
Distribute the activity sheet and read the brief plot description together. Then have students unscramble the words to learn more about the story's main characters.

Answers: Tim's Traits: determined, brave, gullible, honest, skinny. Rover's Traits: loyal, protective, playful, amphibian, slimy.

Writers' Workshop: Students will use the prompts on the activity sheet to create heroes for their own stories. Have students work in teams and provide peer feedback. Students should consider peer suggestions before finalizing the hero and big dream for their stories.

Activity 2: Mapping the Quest

Distribute the activity sheet and review the map. Discuss some possible challenges Tim and his companions might face at each location. For example: In the Forest of Doom, Tim and his friends are attacked by giant Butterflies of Doom, but Rover uses his frog tongue to grab



the butterflies. Use the students' examples to help them see how different settings and the problems they present can shape the story.

Next, discuss the elements of a Hero's Quest story using Tim as an example. Explain that:

- The Hero – Tim is an ordinary boy on a dangerous journey to become a knight.
- Quest Type – Rescue: Tim is out to rescue a princess.
- Skills – Tim learns to use weapons and wear heavy armor.
- Challenges of the Unknown – The quest map shows Tim's path from his familiar village into unfamiliar and challenging territory.
- Change – Tim becomes less gullible and more confident. *Does he achieve his dream of knighthood?*

Writers' Workshop: Have students use these prompts to outline a quest narrative for the character they created in Activity 1. Remind them to include the elements of a Hero's Quest in their story.

Activity 3: That Was Unexpected!

Ask students about humorous books they have read and what makes them funny. Then distribute the activity sheet and review the list of humorous literary devices. Encourage students to offer examples of each device from their own reading or writing.

Writers' Workshop: Have students use the list of humorous devices to create a funny event for the beginning, middle, and end of their stories. To conclude the unit, have students draw on the three workshops to write their own fun narratives.

Resources

- ymiclassroom.com/onceuponatim
- simonandschuster.net/books/Once-Upon-a-Tim/Stuart-Gibbs/Once-Upon-a-Tim/9781534499256

DREAM BIG

Meet Tim and Rover from the book, *Once Upon a Tim!* In this hilarious story, Tim has big dreams of becoming a knight. The problem is, he wasn't born into royalty, which means he has to do something brave to achieve his dream, something like setting out on a quest to save Princess Grace from the dreaded Stinx monster. Lucky for Tim, his faithful pet Rover is by his side every step of the way. If you couldn't tell, Rover is Tim's pet who acts like a dog but looks like a frog — a fr-dog! Together with his fearless best friend Belinda, a sneaky magician named Nerlim, Prince Ruprecht, a cowardly knight, and Ferkle, the hapless friend with a big secret, Tim sets out to save Princess Grace and follow his big dream.

Meet the Characters: Learn more about Tim and Rover. Unscramble these words that describe some of their internal traits (how they are on the inside) and external traits (how they appear on the outside). We've given you some hints. Cross out the letters already used in the answer.



TIM



ROVER



PRINCESS GRACE



BELINDA



NERLIM



PRINCE RUPRECHT



FERKLE

TIM'S TRAITS

neidetrdem d _ _ _ r _ _ _ _ d

vraeb b _ _ _ _

ugblliel g _ l _ _ b _ e

noetsh h _ _ _ s _

nskniy _ k _ _ n _

ROVER'S TRAITS

oally _ o _ _ _

ropctevite p _ _ t _ _ _ _ v _

alfypul _ _ _ a _ _ _ _

biamphain a _ _ h _ _ _ _ _

imlsy _ l _ _ y

Writers' Workshop

Interesting characters give life to a story! Rover the fr-dog is a great example of a fantasy character. His mannerisms are all dog, while his looks are pure frog. Tim is just an average boy of Medieval Times whose quest and dream of knighthood are far from average.

What kind of character might you invent to be the hero of your story? Will it be a fantasy or realistic character? What big dream might this character have? On the back of this sheet, create a detailed character profile based on your ideas. Include each item below:

- Character profile – a brief description of your character
- External (outside) traits
- Internal (inside) traits
- Character's big dream (brainstorm ideas)



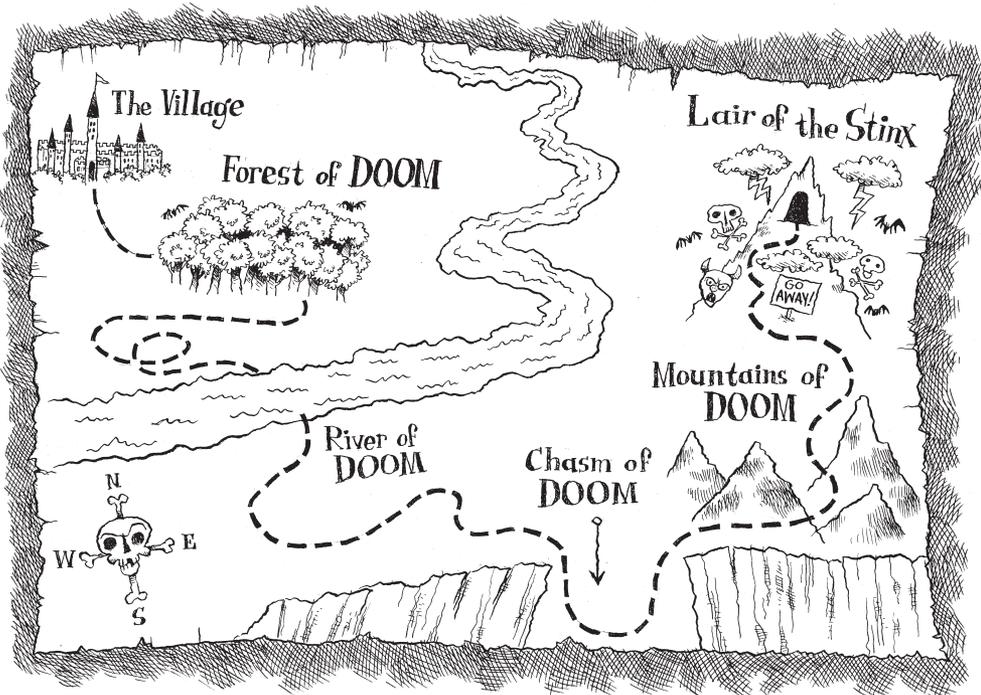
THE STINX MONSTER



MAPPING THE QUEST

“There’s an awful lot of doom in our kingdom.” — Tim, upon seeing the map leading to the Lair of the Stinx.

All About Location: Look at the map below. Use your imagination to predict what challenge you think awaits Tim and his companions at each location and why.



A Hero's Quest

A hero's quest is a classic kind of a story in literature. Here's what it's all about.

- **The Hero** – character who sets out on an almost impossible journey
- **Three Quest Types** – rescue, collect something, deliver something
- **Skills** – hero learns special skills before embarking on the quest
- **Challenges of the Unknown (Problems)** – hero journeys from the familiar into the unknown where they face many challenges
- **Change** – hero is changed on the inside because of the quest, learning something new about themselves

Writers' Workshop

Begin a quest story for the character you developed in Activity 1. Complete the prompts to write about a challenge your character must face at the beginning, middle, and end of the quest plotline. Then on the back of this sheet, draw and map locations in your quest story.

My character (name of hero character from Activity 1): _____

My character's quest (explain the quest type): _____

Beginning location of quest story: _____

Problem the hero has at this location: _____

Middle location of quest story: _____

Problem the hero faces at this location: _____

Ending location of quest story: _____

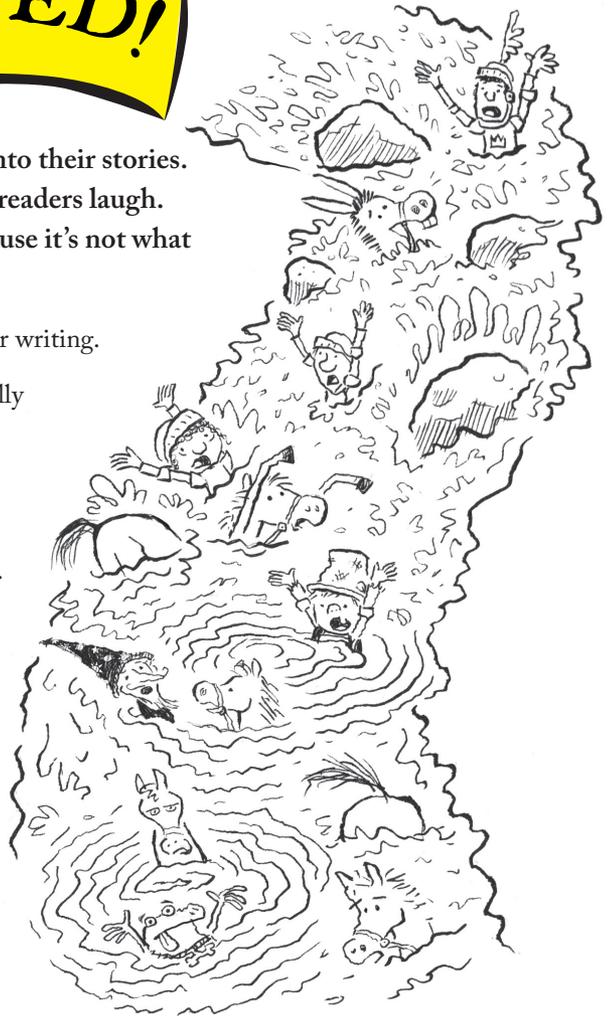
Problem the hero faces at this location: _____

THAT WAS UNEXPECTED!

Who doesn't like a funny story? There are many ways authors weave humor into their stories. In the book *Once Upon a Tim*, author Stuart Gibbs uses *incongruity* to make readers laugh. Incongruity is the sense that something is out of place, or seems strange because it's not what you expect. For example, Rover is a giant frog that acts like a dog.

Add Humor to Your Writing: Below are more tools you can use to add humor to your writing.

- **HYPERBOLE** – extreme or impossible exaggeration not meant to be taken literally
 - ★ Example: My backpack weighs a ton!
- **UNDERSTATEMENT** – statement that makes a situation seem less severe or important than it really is
 - ★ Example: Maybe eating a carton of ice cream wasn't the best way to start the day.
- **SURPRISE** – unexpected turn of events in a scene, paragraph, or ending
 - ★ Example: In *Once Upon a Tim*, readers experience a funny surprise when they learn that Ferkle is not at all who everyone thinks he is.
- **METAPHOR** – comparing things that have something in common but are not at all alike
 - ★ Example: He had more problems than a math book.
- **PUN** – play on words where terms with similar or exact sounds have a different meaning; sometimes puns can even be found in names
 - ★ Example: Some people say I'm addicted to somersaults but that's just how I roll.
 - ★ Example: The name of a witch in *Once Upon a Tim* is Witch Waydideeego.



Writers' Workshop

Create humorous events that happen to your character for each plot line you listed in Activity 2. Outline the events in the spaces below. As you brainstorm, imagine what the event would look like and draw it on the back of this sheet.

Beginning

Middle

End
