

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Live from the Fifth Grade

by

### Colleen O'Shaughnessy McKenna

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### Book Information

Colleen O'Shaughnessy McKenna, Live from the Fifth Grade

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Roger's practical jokes land him in trouble at his parochial school.

**Topics:** Community Life, School; Humor/Funny, Practical Jokes; Mysteries, Thefts; Series, Marsha Cessano/Roger Friday

### Main Characters

Berry an eighth-grader and the star of the basketball team, who is idolized by Roger and Patrick

Bob an eighth-grade basketball player who takes the printer from the computer room

Eddie a basketball player who punches Berry at a practice

Marsha Cessano classmate and worst enemy of Roger and the object of many of Roger's pranks

Mr. Doyle the kind custodian at Sacred Heart School, who was injured in a childhood accident that damaged his brain

Patrick Frank Roger's best friend; a model student who enjoys Roger's pranks and helps with the plan to catch the thief

Roger Friday the principal character in the story, a fifth-grade boy at Sacred Heart School with a love for pranks and an unappreciated sense of humor

Sister Celeste a retired nun at the convent who celebrates her eighty-seventh birthday

Sister Mary Elizabeth a strict principal whose patience is tried by Roger's pranks

### Vocabulary

**convent** a building where nuns live

**detention** a punishment for breaking school rules

**nun** a woman who belongs to a religious order and takes vows

**Sister** a term used to address a nun

### Synopsis

Roger Friday, a fifth-grader at Sacred Heart School, has a history of getting into trouble for his pranks and his unappreciated sense of humor. When Roger puts a dead snake in Marsha's locker, the principal, Sister Mary Elizabeth, gives him detention. Roger is expected to serve detention by helping the custodian, Mr. Doyle, after school. Roger also promises his parents that he will behave for the rest of the semester, but only for the rest of the semester.

Roger and his best friend Patrick try to win the admiration of the basketball team by raising money for new uniforms. Roger is surprised when Patrick, a model student, tries to get detention so they can work together. While the boys work in the gym, Berry is punched by his teammate, Eddie. Roger convinces Mr. Doyle to let them use his keys to open the nurse's office for Berry. After helping Berry, they leave the keys in the door for several minutes. The following morning they discover the new school printer and Mr. Doyle's key to the computer room are missing.

Roger feels terrible that he has caused trouble for Mr. Doyle. He, Patrick and Marsha decide to help Mr. Doyle by catching the thief. They make sure the basketball players know they are putting an expensive-looking bracelet into Marsha's locker. Then they wait in the supply closet for the thief to take the bracelet. The kids are surprised when Bob finds them in the supply closet. Roger realizes that Bob hid the printer in the supply closet. Roger confronts Bob when he returns for the printer and pulls the fire alarm to stop Bob from leaving the school with it.

Although Sister Mary Elizabeth appreciates their efforts to help Mr. Doyle, she makes them "volunteer" at the convent for breaking school rules. At the convent, Roger accidentally uses Sister Celeste's bean dip to clean burnt pudding from the

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bottom of a pan. He is relieved that Sister Mary Elizabeth thinks the mistake is funny, and he is pleased that he makes her laugh.

## Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

### Initial Understanding

When Sister confronts Roger about the fire alarm, he says it was not a prank but that he did it on purpose. What is the difference?

*The intent of a prank is for humor or revenge. Roger intended to be helpful when he pulled the alarm. Discussion might follow about the intent of other examples in the story such as, putting the snake in the locker, washing the pan with bean dip, remarks made to Marsha and changing the lines to their script.*

### Literary Analysis

Why do you think Bob confessed to Sister Mary Elizabeth that he had taken the printer? If he had not confessed, what would Roger have done? Support your answer.

*Bob may have confessed because he felt guilty, he knew Roger would tell Sister, he knew he would be in more trouble if he lied, or because he felt loyal to Roger for not saying anything to Sister. Roger may have pleaded the Fifth Amendment, or he may have told on Bob. Support might include the fact that Roger did not lie, Roger wanted to get Mr. Doyle out of trouble, and Roger wanted Sister to be proud of him.*

### Inferential Comprehension

When Roger compares himself to Patrick, Roger decides he is not very smart. In which ways is Roger smart?

*Roger is clever; he thinks quickly and handles difficult situations well. Examples of this include how he handles the pudding, his ability to add lines to their script so that it made sense, and his stopping Bob from leaving with the printer. It might be pointed out that Roger thinks Mr. Doyle is smart because he knows to be nice to people. A discussion on ways people can be smart might follow.*

### Constructing Meaning

How does Roger's view of his sense of humor change during the course of the story? Support your answer with details you remember from the story.

*Roger initially felt his sense of humor was a curse because it was not appreciated by adults. He was punished often for his pranks and was not paid as adult comedians are. Roger states several times that being funny is not easy. At the end of the story, Roger is pleased that he made Sister Mary Elizabeth laugh and sees value in his sense of humor.*

## Teachable Skills

**Understanding Sequence** In this story, one event seems to lead to the next. Ask students to track the events of the story. List all the major events and summarize with a sentence or short paragraph. Draw a line covering the length of a piece of paper or posterboard. Beginning at the left and moving to the right, draw a dot for each event, then write the summary next to it. Or, write the summary of each event on a card. Shuffle the cards and let the students put them in order without referring to the book. Discuss how the story would have changed if any events had happened differently.

**Making Predictions** Before the printer was stolen, Roger said he planned to get even with Marsha on January second. Nothing further is said about his plans to get even. Will he try to get even with Marsha by pulling a big practical joke,

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or has he learned that practical jokes can have unwanted consequences? Ask students to write a new ending to the story describing how Roger and Marsha might get along in the future. Discuss practical jokes that have unwanted consequences. Find another book that revolves around a practical joke.

**Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning** At the end of the story, Roger suggested they tell Sister Celeste that he "polished off" the bean dip. The words bring humor into the story because they have a double meaning. Ask the students to list other words or phrases with double meanings. Examples can be found in the popular Amelia Bedelia series. Students may want to write a paragraph or short story around words or phrases from their list.

**Describing Actions or Events** Much of the humor in this book comes from the reactions of characters. Divide the class into groups and have them act out a short scene from the book. Fun scenes to act out might include Marsha finding the snake in the locker while Roger acts innocent; Sister questioning Roger about the snake; Patrick trying to get detention; Roger, Marsha and Patrick performing their script for the basketball players; Marsha burning the pudding while Roger comes to the rescue.