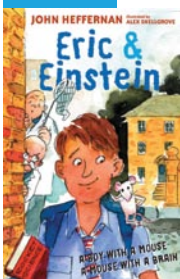


Eric & Einstein

John Heffernan

Teachers' Notes

This text is more suitable for the younger reader. The teachers' notes, therefore, focus more on basic comprehension exercises included in a Wordfind task, using illustrations in the text as a comic strip book writing exercise, as well as questions and tasks relating to themes, issues and points of interest that arise out of the text. The activities are intended to bring variety and enjoyment to the students' study of this book, while giving the students a chance to demonstrate their understanding of the content and exercise their creative abilities.



SYNOPSIS

Eric is neglected by his rich parents, who are always too busy with their work, while also being bullied by his teachers and fellow students. Everyone, including Eric, believes he is a no-hoper, without much of a brain. He connects well with animals but is allowed no pets. After escaping a bullying incident Eric finds himself at a pet shop. Here he buys a mouse, Einstein, who turns out to have a super-brain, courtesy of the mad Doctor von Burpinburger. Suddenly Eric's life changes. Discovering that he can communicate with Einstein, Eric becomes a genius. He gains everyone's respect, including that of his parents. Eric and Einstein find themselves on TV as contestants on *The Big Brain Game*, and play for a prize of \$1 million. The outcome of the quiz leads to a surprise ending.

THE CHARACTERS

Eric Wimpleby – the human protagonist.

Einstein – the mouse protagonist.

Doctor von Burpinburger – the mad scientist.

Tikazza Brique – von Burpinburger's brainless assistant.

Nathan Sharp – a bully and Eric's nemesis at school.

Mr. Growlworthy – Principal of Templeton Grammar, Eric's school.

Miss Graymouth – Eric's teacher.

Mr & Mrs Wimpleby – Eric's parents.

Professor Reedweed – who sees Eric as a specimen to be studied.

Dwyer McHiflyer – compere of the TV quiz show *The Big Brain Game*.

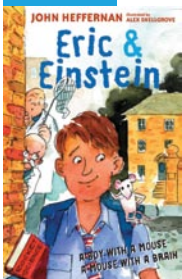
QUESTIONS AND TASKS

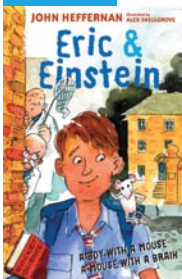
WORDFIND

In order to complete the Wordfind you will need to answer all the questions. The answers are all found in the book. Make a list of all the answers, making sure you check the spelling, and then locate them on the Wordfind. They appear horizontally, vertically, backwards and forwards, but they are always in a straight line. When you have located all the answers on the Wordfind, the remaining 121 letters will spell out a hidden question for you to answer. Find out what it is. (For teachers, the answers appear in the brackets.)

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Doctor von Burpinburger do when he is excited? (BURP)
2. In what does Doctor von Burpinburger live? (CASTLE)
3. What kind of animal is Einstein? (MOUSE)
4. What is the full name of Doctor von Burpinburger's assistant? (TIKAZZA BRIQUE)
5. What does Doctor von Burpinburger implant into the mouse's brain?
(NANO COMPUTER)
6. What does Doctor von Burpinburger name the mouse? (EINSTEIN)
7. In what do Eric and his parents live? (PENTHOUSE)
8. What is the name of Eric's grammar school? (TEMPLETON)
9. What is the school principal's nickname? (GROWLY)
10. List the three (3) types of land transportation Einstein used to reach the pet shop.
(HORSE AND CART / TRAIN / TAXI)
11. a) With what do Eric and Einstein communicate? (TELEPATHY)
b) How does Einstein define this process? (THINK TALKING)
12. What was Einstein doing in Eric's pocket during most of the time the professor was firing questions at Eric? (SLEEPING)
13. On what part of Eric's clothing did Doctor von Burpinburger see Einstein, when Eric appeared on TV? (BLAZER POCKET)
14. Who wrote Macbeth? (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE)
15. What was Einstein cleaning when Eric's father thought he saw a mouse in the bathroom? (TEETH)
16. What lands on Eric's penthouse terrace? (BRIGHT RED HELICOPTER)
17. What is the name of the quiz show? (THE BIG BRAIN GAME)
18. a) What is the quiz compere's surname? (MCHIFLYER)
b) What is his first name? (DWYER)

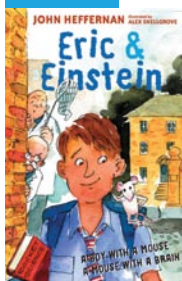




19. For which channel does the compere work? (FOUR)
20. In total, how many questions does Eric have to answer correctly? (NINETY)
21. How many dollars can Eric win? (ONE MILLION)
22. How many episodes will it take for Eric to answer all the questions? (THREE)
23. What does Eric win if he gets a question wrong? (NOTHING)
24. a) What food do Doctor von Burpinburger and Brique bring in order to catch Einstein? (CHEESE)
b) What else do they take with them? (MOUSE TRAP)
25. What is the name of the sun god worshipped by the ancient Incas? (INTI)
26. What did Julius Caesar cross? (RUBICON)
27. What sort of a nap did Einstein take during the second episode of *The Big Brain Game*? (CATNAP)
28. What did Einstein want to drink when he woke up from his sleep, before the last episode of the quiz? (COFFEE)
29. What container did Einstein use for his drink? (THIMBLE)
30. What is the capital of Ethiopia? (ADDIS ABABA)
31. Where is Mauna Kea? (HAWAII)
32. Does Eric answer the final question? (NO)
33. What is the book illustrator's first name? (ALEX)

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* The hidden question is: ERIC IS HONEST, HAS A CONSCIENCE, HE FEELS GUILTY. HE REVEALS THESE FEELINGS IN THE BOOK. LIST AND DISCUSS OCCASIONS WHERE ERIC REVEALS THESE FEELINGS.



WRITING A COMIC STRIP BOOK

Refer to the illustrations on the pages listed below. Draw (it doesn't matter if you are not very artistic), or trace, these pictures, framing them in boxes, just like in a comic strip book.

Compose a story around these pictures, use your own words when narrating and use direct quotes from the story in your quotation bubbles – you can use quotation bubbles coming out of characters' mouths to show what they are saying, as well as writing narratives below the picture boxes.

These are the pages with the illustrations for your comic strip book:

3,6,10,13,18,21,26 (the third one only), **33,41,42,45,50,54,59,64,67,73,78,85,92,99**.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THEMES, ISSUES AND POINTS OF INTEREST

1. **Literary parallels** – The story of *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley, also begins with the creation of a being, by a scientist, in a castle. Find out about the story of *Frankenstein* and compare it to the story of *Eric & Einstein*.
2. **Genius** – Who was Albert Einstein?
3. **Play on words** – The author, John Heffernan, has given his major characters rather interesting and appropriate names. Refer to the list of characters and discuss how and why the names fit their characters.
4. **Medical technology** – Doctor von Burpinburger used computer technology to create a super brain. Can you list any recent medical advances that have been made possible with the use of modern technology, especially where they include information on computer chips?
5. **Self-esteem** – At the beginning of the story, how does Eric feel about himself? Why does he feel this way? Is he alone in his estimation of his worth? How and why does this change? Discuss the role that self-esteem plays in your life.
6. **Bullying** – Examples of bullying arise in the early part of the story. Who are the bullies, which characters are being bullied, and what form do these acts of bullying take? Most schools have introduced a policy to stop bullying. What guidelines have been set by your school to stop bullying?
7. **Telepathy** – Eric and Einstein, most of the time, communicate through mental telepathy, think talking. ESP (extra-sensory perception) is also a form of non-verbal communication. Can you think of any other forms of non-vocal communication where you do not make a sound when you speak? By whom and when might these be used?

8. **Honesty, conscience, guilt, consideration for others** – Give an example of when and how Eric displays each one of these characteristics somewhere in the story. Discuss how you would feel, and what you would do, if you found yourself in similar positions.
9. **Dependence and independence** – How involved are Eric's parents in his life? Would you say Eric is in any way deprived? How? Why? Has that made him independent? In what way? Is there anyone on whom Eric becomes dependent? How and why?
10. What do you understand by the term **media circus**? Give an account of such a situation in this story.
11. **Quizzes** – Do you think Einstein gave Eric the right or wrong answer to the last quiz question? Why? What do you think prompted Eric to withdraw from the quiz before answering the last question? Would you give up the chance to win \$1 million? Why? Do you watch or listen to quiz shows? Why?
12. **A sequel?** – What makes you think there may be another *Eric & Einstein* book in the future? Quote the line that shows this is a possibility. This line is similar to another quote from an action movie of the past. Can you name the movie and actor credited with that line?
13. **Geography** – Eric (and Einstein) are asked numerous questions about different places in the world. With the aid of an atlas, draw a map of the world and locate and mark in the countries and cities mentioned in the book.

