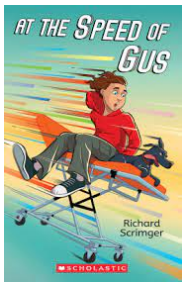
At The Speed of Gus

Lesson Plan



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Illustrator:

Grade: 4-7

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." -Dalai Lama

Teacher Reflections:

Book Summary:

Gus is a thoughtful, caring young man whose mind and mouth move at a different speed than the world around him. Gus has ADHD and takes medication to help him focus. In this story, the reader follows Gus's mind at high speed through a stressful day filled with many twists on his journey to meet his sister at her college. On this day, Gus confronts the challenges of living in his brain and struggles to tell what is real from what is imagined. In the end, Gus discovers new ways to see his brain as a gift and begins to appreciate himself not in spite of his differences, but because of them.

Teacher's Notes:

Resources:

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Pre-Reading Questions:

1. Based on the cover and title of this book, what do you think it will be about?
2. When you have a lot of energy, how do you manage to focus it into the things you need or want. to do? What tricks do you have/have you learned?
3. Do you always feel like you're in control of your thoughts, actions and feelings? How does it make you feel to be in/out of control?
4. Do you have favourite memories or scenes from your life that you come back to when you're feeling terrible.

Activities:

Activity 1: What is Neurodiversity?

Students will watch and discuss 2 videos about neurodiversity and reflect on how their brains work.

While Reading

Questions:

1. p.9 - Gus has been told that his “mind moves fast, but doesn’t brake or steer well”. How does Gus describe what goes on in his head (attention, energy)? What is Gus known for at school?
2. p.20 - No one seems to understand Gus. How does this makes him feel?
3. What role does Ruby play in Gus’s life? How is their relationship different than his relationship with other family members and friends? Why is this important in Gus’s life?
4. What happens to Gus on the ferry? Why does he feel like his brain has let him down? What impact does that have on him (stress)? Have you ever had that feeling?
5. p. 104 - Are you worried about Gus at this point? If you ran into him on this misadventure, what do you think you'd see in Gus?
6. p. 153 - Why does it surprise Gus that people care about him?
7. What is the significance of the little black dog? Why doesn't Gus tell anybody about it at first

Activities:

Activity 2: Personal Journal

Students will reflect on how they feel about themselves and the things about themselves that they like. They will journal and/or draw about their reflections.

Activity 3: Sense to Ground You

Students will be introduced to a mindfulness activity that is linked back to a realization Gus has and a practice he develops in the book.

Post-Reading

Questions:

1. How did you feel about this book? Was it hard to read Gus's unfiltered thoughts?
2· What are some of the interesting and challenging things about the way Gus thinks?
3· What are some of the feelings Gus is learning to manage in his everyday life? (ex: impatience, impulsiveness, forgetfulness, wandering mind, restlessness, acting without thinking)
o Do you ever face some of the same challenging feelings?
o How do you manage them?
4. The book ends with Gus realizing that that is where his story starts.
o Why do you think that is?
o Where do you think your story starts?

Activities:

Activity 4: Mindfulness Teacher

Students will explore various mindfulness activities online and reflect on the ones that make them feel the best.

Activity 5: Good Memories

Students will work individually to reflect on and journal or draw about a difficult time in their life that they were able to draw a good memory from.