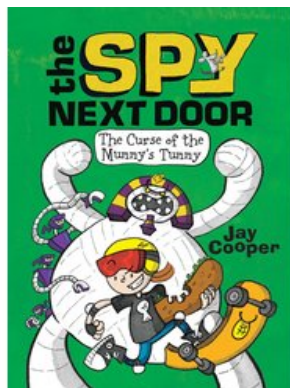
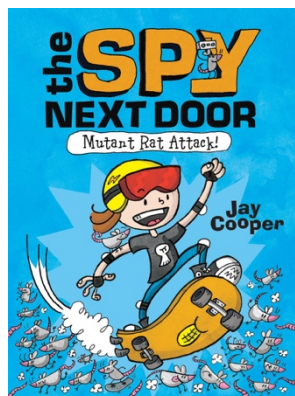


# A Curriculum Guide for Educators & Readers



Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *The Spy Next Door: Mutant Rat Attack!* and *The Spy Next Door: The Curse of the Mummy's Tummy* as a classroom read-aloud or as selections for independent reading. Great for book clubs, too!

## About the Author-Illustrator, Jay Cooper

Jay Cooper has worked as a creative director and designer of magazines, books, apparel, and advertising for two decades. He's had the good luck to design covers for New York Times best-sellers as well as literary classics, and the even better luck to work on art and advertising campaigns for more than a hundred Broadway musicals and plays. However, nothing makes him happier than returning to his literature-loving roots and creating and illustrating stories for kids. He lives with his wife and children in Maplewood, New Jersey.



## Common Core Aligned for 2-5<sup>th</sup> Grades

K: ELA.RL.K.1,2,3,4,6,7,9,10; W.K.1,2,3,6,7,8; SL.K.1,2,3,4,5; L.K.1,2,4,5

1<sup>st</sup>: ELA.RL.1.1,2,3,4,7,9; W.1.1,2,3,5,6,7,8; SL.1.1,2,3,4,5; L.1.1,2,4,5

2<sup>nd</sup>: ELA.RL.2.1,2,3,7; W.2.1,2,3,6,7,8; SL.2.1,2,3,4; L.2.1,2,3,4,5

3<sup>rd</sup>: ELA.RL.3.1,2,3,4,5,7; W.3.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8; SL.3.1,2,3,4; L.3.1,2,3,4,5,

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## Before You Read...

1. Take a close look at the cover illustrations of *The Spy Next Door: Mutant Rat Attack* and/or *The Spy Next Door: The Curse of the Mummy's Tummy*. What do you see? Describe the boy character. Can you guess what the story might be about? What clues can you find in the cover to support your prediction?
2. Read the text on the back of the book(s). What do you learn about the story(ies) from this blurb? What questions does it raise about the story(ies)?
3. Open the book(s) and read the chapter titles. Do the titles give any further information regarding what the book(s) might be about?
4. Using all this information, can you make any predictions about what might happen in the book(s)?

## Mutant Rat Attack!

### Chapter 1

1. The book opens with a dream sequence. Why do you think Cooper chose to start the story in this way?
  - a. What information do we learn about Dexter through the dream sequence?
2. Who is Dexter? Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Dexter, on a large piece of paper.
  - a. Using chapter one as evidence, write any known details about Dexter inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions about Dexter that the class might have.
3. Dexter's last name is Drabner, which is like the word "drab." What does it mean to be "drab"?
  - a. Millicent, Dexter's next door neighbor, calls him several names because she thinks he is boring. List at least three nicknames Millicent gives Dexter and explain why you think she calls him these names in your own words.
  - b. Then, make a list of the things that Dexter does. Do you think Dexter is regular and boring? Explain your answer.
4. How does Dexter end up in the subway?

- a. Who does Dexter meet in the subway?
- b. Imagine that you are a guitarist on the subway platform and make up a song about chapter one.

## Chapters 2-4

1. What does Dexter like about Mr. McFur's class?
2. Describe Mr. McFur's Stinktastic, Farterific Discovery in your own words.
  - a. What does Mr. McFur hope to accomplish with his Rat Mind Molder?
  - b. Why does the school board plan to confiscate Mr. McFur's rats?
3. What does Dexter hope to find when he sneaks back to Mr. McFur's classroom after school?
  - a. Describe at least two discoveries that Dexter makes.
4. What is Gamma Broccoli and how do you think it might help Mr. McFur?
  - a. What happens when Pretty eats the broccoli?
  - b. How does Dexter save Principal Pickles?
  - c. What comes to Dexter's rescue?
  - d. Where does Dexter's rescuer take him?

### Making Connections:

Mr. McFur knows a lot about rats. Take a trip to the school library and with the help of the librarian you can learn about rats, too!

Possible sources for information:

- Nonfiction books
- Encyclopedias
- The Internet

Take notes on what you find. Information to be gathered must include:

- The many types of rats
- What rats eat and where they live
- Write 3 words that describe a rat
- Interesting fact #1
- Interesting fact #2
- Interesting fact #3

Once all the needed research is done, create a poster visual with all the necessary information and present your findings to the class.

## **Chapters 5-7**

1. Describe where the skateboard takes Dexter.
  - a. Who does he find there?
  - b. What do you learn about the skateboard?
  - c. What is the very first rule of the Super-Secret Spy Kids? How did Toby Falcon violate this rule?
2. What was Toby's assignment with the Super-Secret Spy Kids?
3. According to Big K, why does the world need more superheroes? Do you agree or disagree?

- a. Do you know any real-life superheroes? Explain.
- 4. In your own words, explain why Dexter makes the perfect spy.
- 5. Use the chart below to detail Dexter’s spy training.

<b>Training #</b>	<b>Describe training</b>	<b>Why do you think this is important for a spy</b>
1	Skate training. High-speed half-pipe chases on a skateboard.	
2		
3		
4		

- 6. How is the Gas-B-Gone supposed to save the day?
- 7. What is the major obstacle to the plan that B.O.A.R.D tells Big K and Dexter about?
- 8. How does B.O.A.R.D create a distraction to allow Dexter into the school undetected?
- 9. When Mr. McFur calls himself a “failure of a science teacher,” what advice does Dexter give him?

### Making Connections:

Spies often hide somewhere to secretly watch for illegal activity. This is called a stakeout. Sometimes they use cameras, video cameras, or high-tech audio recording devices to gather the evidence. These are surveillance tools.

Pretend you want to solve a mystery. Maybe you want to know where your missing socks from the laundry go. Maybe you want to know who keeps moving your toys. Maybe you want to know if your dog ate your cookies.

Plan a stakeout.

- Where would you hide?
- What surveillance tools would you use to help gather the evidence?
- What else would you take on a stakeout? Food? Drinks? Something to pass the time?
- Draw a map of the stakeout area complete with all details of your plan.

Present your stakeout plan to the class.

## Chapters 8-10

1. Who is the BROdent?
  - a. How does he help save Principal Pickles?
  - b. How did Dexter's advice to Mr. McFur lead to the BROdent?
2. On YouTube, watch the movie clip from *King Kong* (1933) when the ape climbs the top of the Empire State Building.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qkahQVFzMI>. Then, looking at the following elements from Chapter 8, explain how this scene is a parody of the iconic scene from *King Kong*.
  - a. The Girder City Skyscraper.
  - b. The rats on skateboards.
  - c. Principal Pickles.
  - d. Pretty
3. What causes Pretty to climb down the skyscraper?

4. How does Dexter get out of Pretty's stomach?
5. What causes Principal Pickles to say that Mr. McFur was right about the rat megafarts?
6. What proposition does Big K make to Mr. McFur? Explain why.
7. What does Dexter say to keep his identity safe from Principal Pickles? Millicent?

### Making Connections:

You, too, can join the Super-Secret Spy Kids.

Using Big K's identification card on page 66 as an example, create your own id. card.

- Have someone take your photo. Be sure to look like a super tough spy!
- Give yourself a spy name.
- Include any other information you see fit.

You can cover the badges with a layer of clear packing tape on the front and back for quick faux-lamination.

## ***The Curse of the Mummy's Tummy*** **Chapter 1**

1. At the beginning of the story Dexter Drabner is in the middle of a Capture the Flag game. Describe in your own words what is happening and how the game ends.
2. Who is Dexter? Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Dexter, on a large piece of paper.
  - a. Using chapter one (including illustrations) as evidence, write any known details about Dexter inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions about Dexter that you might have.

3. Who is Aya? Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Aya, on a large piece of paper.
  - a. Using chapter one (including illustrations) as evidence, write any known details about Aya inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions about Aya that you might have.
4. Describe the differences between how Dexter behaves at the end of the game towards Aya and how Aya behaves at the end of the game towards Dexter.

## Chapters 2-4

1. Who is Dexter's best friend and why is his best friend in the library?
2. Where is Dexter's class going on a field trip?
3. The giant mummified pharaoh at the museum is said to be cursed. What does that mean?
4. Who are the Super-Secret Spy Kids?
  - a. Who is Agent SK8?
  - b. Why is Dexter is the perfect spy?
5. Describe in your own words how Dexter and B.O.A.R.D. are transported to the Super-Secret Spy Kids headquarters.
6. Imagine that you are B.O.A.R.D. and write a diary entry about Super-Secret Scientist M, how you feel since he has disappeared, and what you think might have happened to him.
7. Use the chart below to detail Dexter's training.

<b>Obstacle #</b>	<b>Describe obstacle</b>	<b>How does Dexter defeat the obstacle</b>
1	Joysticks	
2		



8. The Ho-Hum Herald is the chosen newspaper among the spy set. Can you spot the secret code in the article about the cat?
  - a. What is Dexter's mission?
9. What is supposedly the Curse of the Pharaoh Hun-Ga-Re?
10. What is the shadowy figures plan?
11. B.O.A.R.D. needs to stay on the bus during the field trip, but he places a sticker on Dexter. What do you think that sticker might be for?
12. Carefully read Principal Pickles's telling of the curse of Hun-Ga-Re and then create a museum brochure that details the legend, including illustrations.
13. Who seems to be missing from the class group?
  - a. Who is sent to go find the missing student?
  - b. Why do you think this partnering might be troublesome? Write a paragraph predicting what might happen.

### Making Connections:

Write secret messages using hieroglyphics!

Ancient Egyptians used pictures instead of letters for their alphabet. You can create your own secret language using hieroglyphics, too!

With a lined sheet of paper, create two columns with a long vertical line. In one column write the letters A-Z, one letter per line.

Then in the other column, draw simple symbols to represent each letter (maybe an apple or asp for the letter A, and a basketball or a bean for the letter B)

Duplicate the list and give to your friends.

By writing a note using the symbols instead of letters, your friends will be able to "decode" and translate your message!

## **Chapters 5-7**

1. What is Aya doing when Millicent and Dexter find her?

- a. What secret information does Aya mistakenly tell the robot ninjas?
2. Why is Aya mad that Dexter tackled her and saved her from the robot's arm?
3. What wakes the mummy of Hun-Ga-Re?
4. How did B.O.A.R.D. know to come to the rescue?
5. What happens when Aya paints her nails?
6. Often nail polish colors have fun and interesting names. Be creative and come up with a name for the blackish pink color that Aya uses.

### Making Connections:

Create a map of the museum and include all the locations that are mentioned in Chapters 5-7.

Be sure to label each area and provide a path to show the location and journey of each character.

## **Chapters 8-9**

1. What is a secret identity?
  - a. What is Dexter's secret identity?
  - b. What is Aya's?
  - c. Madstachio is also a secret identity, but of who?
  - d. Why do you think is it important for spies and villains to have secret identities?
2. Aya says she doesn't need friends. Why do you think she says this?
  - a. Do you think this is true?
  - b. How can friends be important? Create a list based on the book and your own life experiences.
3. Aya, Dexter, and B.O.A.R.D. decide to form a team to save the hoagie from the N.E.R.T.s. What powers or abilities do each of them have that help the mission?

4. What is Madstachio's plan?
  - a. Why is Hun-Ga-Re allowing Madstachio to handle the hoagie?
  - b. What happens when Madstachio bites into the hoagie?
5. How did Millicent kinda save the day?
6. Dexter uses his training to get the hoagie. Explain how.

## After You Read...

Here are a few extension activities to further the learning and the fun!

### 1. Re-enactment

Have students work together to create a newscast about Dexter's adventures to present to their classmates. Students will write a script and take on the roles of anchors and on-site reporters. Students can choose to interview characters and eyewitnesses. Videotape the final newscasts so that students can watch themselves on TV.

### 2. The Ho-Hum Herald

Choose either *Mutant Rat Attack!* or *The Curse of the Mummy's Tummy* and summarize the plot of the book by creating your own front page of the Ho-Hum Herald. Remember that the Ho-Hum Herald is the periodical among the spy set for its secret codes.

### 3. Point of View

Pick a scene you enjoyed or remembered well from one of the books. Re-write the scene from another character's first person point-of-view. Maybe choose B.O.A.R.D.'s or Big K's point of view. Or Mr. McFur.

### 4. Working Together as a Team

Although Dexter and Aya could not defeat the N.E.R.T.s alone, they learned that they could be successful when working together as a team. Try these team-building activities.

*Rubber band Trial* (groups of 4-5)

- You will need several plastic cups, one rubber band and four or five ribbons or strings.
- To make the rubber band grabber, tie pieces of string to the rubber band, spacing them as evenly apart as possible (it should look like a sunshine with sun

rays going out in all directions).

- Each member of the team should hold onto one of the strings that are attached to the rubber band.
- Each group will be tasked with stacking all the plastic cups on top of each other using only the rubber band grabber. The group then uses this tool to pick up the cups and place them on top of each other by pulling the rubber band apart and then bringing it back together over the cups.
- Teams should work to increase speed and accuracy.

5. A Close Look at Illustrations

Go back through the book and closely examine the illustrations. How do the illustrations help tell the story? Which illustration is your favorite? Why?