



## Teaching the Book

Griffin Bing had a rare Babe Ruth baseball card in his hands—until he was tricked into selling it by a fast-talking collector named S. Wendell Palomino (a.k.a. Swindle). Gordon Korman’s fast-paced adventure novel is ideal to teach students how to analyze the sequence of events in a plot and how they are connected. Activities engage students in researching great swindles in American history, practicing baseball card math, and creating a collectible card for their own futures.

**Genre Focus:** Adventure Fiction

**Comprehension Focus:** Analyze Plot Sequence

**Language Focus:** Root Word Families

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Korman was born October 23, 1963 in Montreal, Quebec in Canada. He first came to the United States as a college student to study film and film writing at New York University. Korman has been making readers everywhere laugh out loud ever since he published his first book, *This Can't Be Happening at Macdonald Hall*, at the age of 14. He now has more than 65 novels to his credit.

During his writing career, Korman has written humor, suspense, and action/adventure novels. What is the secret to his success? "It's a combination between real life and pure imagination," Gordon says. "I always start off with something real, but then I unleash my imagination to make it more exciting." Perfect for fans of classics like *Holes* and *Hoot*, *Swindle* is the author at his crowd-pleasing best!

Korman now lives with his wife and children on Long Island, NY. For more about Gordon Korman, visit his website, <http://www.gordonkorman.com/>.

### BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 4–7

Ages: 9+

Lexile Measure®: 710L

Pages: 252

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Subject/Theme: Adventure, Humor, Mystery

Common Core State Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 4	RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.9	W.4.3, W.4.7	SL.4.1, SL.4.4	L.4.4
Grade 5	RL.5.1, RL.5.4, RL.5.5, RL.5.9	W.5.3, W.5.7	SL.5.1, SL.5.4	L.5.4
Grade 6	RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.5, RL.6.9	W.6.3, W.6.7	SL.6.1, SL.6.4	L.6.4
Grade 7	RL.7.1, RL.7.3, RL.7.4	W.7.3, W.7.7	SL.7.1, SL.7.4	L.7.4

## OVERVIEW

### Book Summary

Griffin Bing is *The Man With The Plan*. So when he finds a Babe Ruth baseball card in an abandoned house, he immediately sells it to help solve his family’s financial woes. S. Wendell Palomino of Palomino’s Emporium of Collectibles and Memorabilia assures him that the card is a fake and buys it for \$120. Only hours later, Griffin learns that Palomino is advertising the rare card for sale—for over a million dollars. Griffin has been swindled!

Griffin decides to fight fire with fire and get revenge. He develops an intricate plan to trick Palomino, whom he now calls Swindle, out of the card. At first, the plan only involves his best friend Ben, but, soon, Griffin assembles a group of friends and classmates to assist him in a daring heist of the card from Swindle’s fortress-like house. They include: Savannah, the dog whisperer, who calms down Swindle’s guard dog; Pitch, an expert climber, who scales the house to get inside; and several other specially chosen accomplices.

The plot rockets to the end of the book like the action of a high-stakes spy movie. The heist doesn’t go exactly according to plan, but in the end, justice is served. Griffin gets his revenge, his family doesn’t have to move, and Swindle is, well, swindled!

# Get Ready to Read

## Pre-Reading Activities

**Problem-Solving Scenario** Engage students' interest by presenting them with a challenging scenario similar to the one that Griffin overcomes in *Swindle*. Either read the following scenario aloud or project it on the whiteboard in large type. Challenge students to come up with a solution to the scenario, working with partners or a small group.

A valuable object has been stolen from you and is now hidden away in the thief's house. The house is like a fortress with burglar alarms on all the windows and doors. The only safe entry point is a skylight on the roof of the house. In addition, there is a dangerous guard dog on duty inside the house. And a busybody neighbor sits on his porch staring at the house all day long. AND the thief himself seldom leaves the house. BUT you must get inside to get back what is yours. How will you do it?

Ask students to describe their solutions to the scenario and then vote on which one would be most successful.

**Preview and Predict** Ask students to look at the cover of *Swindle*. What does the illustration show? Ask them to predict what the story might be about.



## BIG QUESTION

**Critical Thinking** Ask students to think about this question as they read. Write the question on chart paper or the whiteboard.

**What do you think of Griffin's plan to get revenge on Swindle?**

## STORIA ENRICHMENTS

To assess and enhance students' comprehension, this Storia e-book contains a Reading Challenge Quiz.

## Vocabulary

**Roots and Word Families** Explain that words often belong to a word family that includes other words with the same root meaning. These other words have different meanings determined by the addition of prefixes, suffixes, or other word endings; for example: *collect, collectible, collector, collection*.

Distribute copies of **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students. Remind students to look for clues in the text for word meanings as they read and then check the meanings in the dictionary. Ask them to write other words with the same root on each vocabulary card.

collectible (p. 21)

mechanism (p. 30)

agitate (p. 53)

exhilaration (p. 91)

ultimate (p. 99)

architectural (p. 109)

voluminous (p. 155)

sensor (p. 173)

## As You Read

### Reading the Book

**Modeled Fluent Reading** Read aloud the first chapter of the book, asking students to follow along in their texts. As you read, stop to model metacognitive processes such as questioning the text: Why are Griffin and Ben spending the night in a condemned building? Might the house really be haunted? What was Griffin's last plan? Remind students to pause and ask themselves questions about the text as they read.

**Independent Reading** Assign students to read *Swindle* independently. To help pace their reading, chunk the book into five to ten reading sessions, depending on the amount of time students have to read during each session. At the end of a section, prompt students to work with partners to ask questions to clarify the text and to share reactions.

## Comprehension Focus

**Analyzing Plot Sequence** *Swindle* is a plot-driven book with the action occurring in a fast-paced sequence. To deepen their comprehension of the plot, teach students to identify the sequence of plot events and analyze the relationship between those events.

Use **Resource #2: Analyze Plot Sequence** to give students practice in analyzing how events are connected and identifying their causal relationships. Project the organizer on a whiteboard or screen and model for students how to identify the connection between the series of plot events from the beginning of the story.

**Model:** In Chapter 3, Griffin shows Ben the baseball card he found. I'll write that down as Event #1. Event #2 is the boys go into Palomino's Emporium of Collectibles and Memorabilia. What is the connection between Event #1 and #2? Griffin hopes to sell the card and help his family keep the house. He goes to Palomino's for an appraisal. Event #3 is Griffin sells the card to Palomino for \$120. What is the connection between Event #2 and #3? When Palomino tells Griffin that the card is a reproduction of an original, Griffin thinks it's not that valuable and takes the money he's offered. Event #4 is Griffin becomes furious when he sees Palomino on TV. Why? He realizes that Palomino lied to him about the card and that he has been swindled!

Pass out copies of Resource #2 and have students fill it out with another sequence of events from the book.

## After You Read

### Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

**1. Adventure Fiction** Which was more important in *Swindle*—character development or the plot? How would you describe the author's purpose for the book? (*Sample answers: The plot was more important in the book than character development—Griffin didn't really change or grow. I think the author's purpose was mostly to entertain with a funny, fast-moving plot.*)

**2. Analyze Plot Sequence** What happened to the money from the baseball card in the end? What series of events caused this? (*Sample answers: Most of the money went to the Cedarville Museum. Darren Vader was given the card by his rich aunt; Darren's parents did not want him to profit from a robbery, so they made him donate most of the money from the card's sale to the museum.*)

**3. Root Word Families** Use another form of the vocabulary words to answer the following questions. How do you think Griffin feels when the police show up at his house? How does he feel when he finds out he doesn't have to move? What kind of person bought the Babe Ruth card? (*Sample answers: agitated, exhilarated, a collector.*)

## WORDS TO KNOW

### Words With Dark Connotations

Give students the following meanings for the vocabulary words, one at a time. Have them hold up the vocabulary card that matches each meaning. Then discuss the other words that belong to that root word family and what they mean.

1. a part of a machine (*mechanism, mechanic, mechanical*)
2. a feeling of excitement and happiness (*exhilaration, exhilarate, exhilarating*)
3. an object valued by collectors (*collectible, collect, collection, collector*)
4. the greatest or final (*ultimate, ultimatum, ultimately*)
5. to shake or disturb (*agitate, agitated, agitation, agitator*)
6. huge or roomy (*voluminous, volume, volumizer*)
7. a detecting instrument (*sensor, sense, senses, sensitive*)
8. related to architecture or building (*architectural, architect, architecture*)

## Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

**1. Text-to-Self** If Griffin asked you to join him in the heist, how would you respond and why? (*Answers will vary.*)

**2. Text-to-World** Why do you think some baseball cards are so valuable? What other kinds of collectibles have great value? Do you think collectibles are worth the money people pay for them? (*Answers will vary.*)

**3. Text-to-Text** *Swindle* has a fast-paced plot. What other books have you read with similarly paced plots? What movies remind you of the book? (*Answers will vary.*)

## Extension Activities

### Reading/Writing Connection

**Write a New Ending** Ask students: Did *Swindle* end the way you predicted it would? What would you change about the ending if you could? After

discussing their answers, challenge students to write a new ending for the book, starting with what happens after Griffin finds the card in the mailbox on page 242. Encourage students to use the style of the book as a mentor text and to write one to two pages of the new ending. Have students exchange papers to share their new endings, or project several examples on the whiteboard and read them aloud.

Don't forget the



## BIG QUESTION

**Critical Thinking** Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Tell them there is more than one right answer.

**What do you think of Griffin's plan to get revenge on Swindle?**

## Content Area Connections

**History** **Greatest U.S. Swindles** "If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is." That famous quotation applies to the greatest swindles in American history. Ask students to visit the Listosaur website for an article about "The Ten Greatest Swindles in United States History" at <http://bit.ly/WWxdal>. Encourage students to choose one of the swindles to present to the class, explaining the swindler, the victims, and the "too good to be true" idea the swindle was based on.

**Math** **Valuable Baseball Cards** Students who are baseball fans will enjoy researching the value of collectible baseball cards. There are many Internet sites that list prices for the cards including historically high prices, as well as, prices for cards of current stars such as Derek Jeter. Ask students to use the monetary values of the cards to write word problems for other students to solve. They can base the problems on appreciation of values, on comparative values, and other math concepts.

**Science** **Dog Whisperer** Griffin's friend Savannah is called the Dog Whisperer in the novel. Ask interested students to learn more about the real-life Dog Whisperer, Cesar

Milan. Have them report back to the class on the psychology and biology behind Milan's approaches to dog training.

### Language Arts

**Legend of the Trojan Horse**

Chapter 10 describes Griffin's version of the Trojan Horse to get Ben inside Palomino's Emporium. Tell students that the legend of the Trojan Horse from Greek mythology is one of the greatest stories of trickery of all time. Provide students with a version of the story to read; then ask them to retell or reread the story, making an audio recording of their version of the legend.

## BIG ACTIVITY

**Your Collectible Card** Have students create a collectible card, like a baseball card, for what they hope to accomplish in the future. First, ask students to imagine that they have accomplished their wildest dreams for the future. How would they design a collectible card about themselves? Print and distribute the **Big Activity: Your Collectible Cards** on page 5. Go over the instructions with students and clarify any questions they have about the activity.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **BIG ACTIVITY:** Your Collectible Card

What do you dream of doing in your future? Create a collectible card that shows what you hope to accomplish. Fill in each part of the card below, then cut it out and glue together.

**Back**

<b>Born on:</b>	<b>Grew Up in:</b>	<b>Now Lives in:</b>	<b>Accomplishments:</b>	<b>Most Famous for:</b>
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**Front**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Image:</b>	<b>Career:</b>
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## READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

### Author Connections



#### Framed

Gordon Korman

**Ages:** 9–13

**Grades:** 4–7

**Lexile Measure:** 730L

**Pages:** 240

Griffin Bing's new principal doesn't like him—and that was before a valuable Super Bowl ring disappeared from the school display case . . . with Griffin's retainer left in its place. Griffin has been framed! First, Griffin ends up in an alternate school. Then he's put under house arrest with an electronic bracelet around his ankle and no way to prove his innocence. Griffin smells a rat—but will he be able to solve the mystery in time? **Available as a Storia e-book**



#### Hideout

Gordon Korman

**Ages:** 9–13

**Grades:** 4–7

**Lexile Measure:** 750L

**Pages:** 228

When Griffin Bing and his friends first met Luthor, he was a vicious attack dog working for a slimy storekeeper named Swindle. But Swindle left town in disgrace, and Griffin's friend Savannah has watched over Luthor ever since. Now that Luthor is famous for almost winning a big dog show, his old owner wants him back. But the kids aren't letting Luthor go without a fight. But just how do you hide a 150-pound Doberman? Griffin has a plan! **Available as a Storia e-book**



#### Showoff

Gordon Korman

**Ages:** 9–13

**Grades:** 4–7

**Lexile Measure:** 740L

**Pages:** 240

Savannah's dog Luthor goes crazy at a mall dog show and injures a national championship-winning beagle. Griffin smells a setup when the beagle's owner sues Savannah's parents, who insist on sending Luthor to the pound. All Griffin has to do is spring Luthor from the pound and train the Doberman to win the big national dog show. After all, how hard can it be to teach a vicious dog new tricks? **Available as a Storia e-book**



#### Zoobreak

Gordon Korman

**Ages:** 9–13

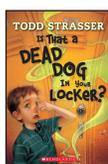
**Grades:** 4–7

**Lexile Measure:** 700L

**Pages:** 240

When Griffin Bing's class goes to a floating zoo, they don't expect to see animals being treated so badly. They also don't expect to find Elvis, Savannah's pet monkey who's been missing for weeks. And they really don't expect to have to hide the animals once they've rescued them! Hilarity ensues as Griffin's team once more pulls off a heist . . . trying to break the animals back into a (better) zoo! **Available as a Storia e-book**

### Theme Connections



#### Is That a Dead Dog in Your Locker?

Todd Strasser

**Ages:** 9–12

**Grades:** 4–6

**Lexile Measure:** 720L

**Pages:** 192

**Guided Reading Level:** S

It seems simple enough. The Tardy Boys and their friend Daisy just need to keep a tiny pug hidden at school for one day. But Assistant Principal Snout has a sensitive sniffer, and Wheezy, the pug, has some seriously funky bad breath. Plus, super-snobby Fibby Mandible and resident bully Billy Slugg will do anything to ruin the Tardy Boys' day. It is going to be a struggle to keep Wheezy secret! **Available as a Storia e-book**



#### Spaghetti Detectives

Andreas Steinhofel

**Ages:** 9–11

**Grades:** 4–6

**Lexile Measure:** 740L

**Pages:** 176

Rico notices amazing things, but sometimes he forgets things like which way is left or right. On his way home one day, he notices a piece of strange-looking spaghetti on the sidewalk. While he's searching for clues about the spaghetti, he meets Oscar, who's super smart. Suddenly, Oscar disappears and Rico hears that he's been kidnapped. Is Rico brave enough to find Oscar? **Available as a Storia e-book**

To find PDF versions of the Storia teacher guides and links to purchase the related books, visit:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## RESOURCE #2: Analyze Plot Sequence

Write a sequence of four events from the story. Then describe how the events are connected to each other.

<b>Event #1</b>	
<b>↑</b> <b>Connection</b> <b>↓</b>	
<b>Event #2</b>	
<b>↑</b> <b>Connection</b> <b>↓</b>	
<b>Event #3</b>	
<b>↑</b> <b>Connection</b> <b>↓</b>	
<b>Event #4</b>	