A CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS & READERS

Aligned to the Common Core K-3

Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Widest, Smartest Dog Ever* as classroom read-aloud or as a selection for independent reading. Great for book clubs, too!

About the Author and Illustrator

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Common Core Aligned for K-3

K: *ELA.RI.K.1, K.2, K.3, K.4, K.6, K.7; W.K.2, K.3, K.7, K.8; SL.K.1, K.2, K.4, K.5; L.K.1, K.2, K.4, K.5*

1st: *ELA.RI.1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7; W.1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8; SL.1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5; L.1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5*

2nd: *ELA.RI.2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6; W.2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.8; SL.2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.4, 2.5; L.2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5*

3rd: *ELA.RI.3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7; W.3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8; SL.3.1, 3.2, 3.4; L.3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5*

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a B.A. in English Education from Oswego State and a M.A. in Educational Theater from NYU. Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit her at www.thisismarciecolleen.com.

Before You Read...

1. Take a close look at the front and back cover illustrations of *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever*. Describe what you see.

   a. Which character do you think is Sparky? What is he doing? How do you think he feels?

   b. Which character do you think is Spike? What is he doing? How do you think he feels?

2. Can you predict when the story takes place? What clues can you find in the cover to support your prediction?

3. Read the text on the jacket flap of the book. What do you learn about the story from this blurb? What questions does it raise about the story?

4. Using all this information, can you make any predictions about what might happen in the book?

Reading Nonfiction

While reading *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever* aloud to the class, have students take notes in two columns:

   o *Things We Learned*
   o *Questions We Have*

Pause before each page turn to add notes to the columns. These columns can either be individual or hung on the board and worked on as a class.

Things We Learned (Facts)	Questions We Have	Answers We Found

- Once the story is read, discuss the *Questions We Have* column.
  - o Were any of these questions answered as the story went along?

- o If so, ask students to find the answer within the text.
  - o Record the answer next to the question in a third column labeled *Answers We Found.*

- For all remaining questions in the *Questions We Have column*, that have yet to be answered, students will need to take the steps to find answers, either through Internet or book research.
  - o Discuss how to find answers to questions through research.
  - o Assign students to specific questions to help them focus.
  - o Record all answers in the *Answers We Found* column.

- After the answers have been shared with the class, engage in a discussion on research practices.
  - o What was most difficult about finding answers?
  - o Was it easier to find answers on the Internet or in a book?
  - o Which source is more reliable, the Internet or a printed book? Why?
  - o How can you determine whether to trust a source?
  - o What tips would you give someone who is about to do research?

- Read the Illustrator's and Author's Notes at the back of the book.
  - o Create an additional chart to document what information in this section was included in the story and what information was not included.
  - o Why do you think certain information was chosen to include in the story and leave other information to the back matter?
  - o Choose three facts from the back matter that were not included in the story and explain why you think each was excluded.

Extension: Design and illustrate posters representing each Fact, Question, and researched Answer based on *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever* and display them within the classroom.

Let's talk about the people who made *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever.*

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?
- Read the illustrator's note at the back of the book. Why do you think Dan Andreasen was a good choice to work on this book?

As You Read...

1. Who is Sparky? Draw an outline of a human figure on a large piece of paper to represent Sparky.

    a. As you read *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever*, write any known details about Sparky inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions about Sparky that you might have.

2. Visit https://www.peanuts.com/characters/charlie-brown/. Describe Charlie Brown in your own words.

    a. Then watch the following video of Charles Schulz on *Charlie Rose*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQBBt_PR9VE.

    b. Charles Schulz created Charlie Brown to be quite autobiographical. What are some similarities between Sparky and Charlie Brown? What are some differences?

3. Who is Spike? Draw an outline of a dog figure on a large piece of paper to represent Sparky.

    a. As you read *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever*, write any known details about Spike inside the outline. Outside of the outline, discuss and write any questions about Spike that you might have.

4. Sparky's dog, Spike, is considered the wildest and smartest dog ever. Who do you think first called Spike this?

    a. In your own words, describe whether *you* think Spike is the wildest or smartest dog. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

    b. What three words would you use to describe Spike?

    c. Snoopy from Peanuts was inspired by Spike. Visit https://www.peanuts.com/characters/snoopy/. What are some similarities between Snoopy and Spike? What are some differences?

5. Describe life for Sparky.

    a. How is his life different from yours?

b. Are there any similarities to your life?

c. What three words would you use to describe Sparky?

6. What is so special about 9 o'clock on Saturday night?

7. Where did Sparky get his nickname from?

a. Research Barney Google and Spark Plug on the Internet and gather information on who they were.

b. How would you describe Spark Plug?

c. Why do you think Sparky was nicknamed after Spark Plug?

d. What is his real name? Why do you think only teachers call him that?

8. Sparky wants to be a cartoonist and draws a man shoveling snow next to a palm tree. Can you make up a story to go with this drawing?

a. Draw four boxes on a sheet of paper, like frames of a comic strip and create a cartoon based on this drawing. Be sure to include a beginning, a middle, and an end.

9. What does Sparky find so tough about school?

10. What does Sparky send to *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*?

a. *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* fun facts cartoons was started in 1918. The cartoon contains very bizarre stories. Visit https://www.ripleys.com/cartoons/ to see some recent fun facts cartoons.

b. Research some weird facts and create a fun facts cartoon of your own, in the style of *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*.

c. What happens to Sparky's cartoon?

After You Read...

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

Get to Know the Peanuts

Spend some time reading the Peanuts comic strip. An archive can be found online at: https://www.gocomics.com/peanuts.

- What three words would you use to describe the comic strip?

- Then, try your hand at creating a comic strip of your own based on your friends and maybe even your pet, in the style of the Peanuts.

Quotable Schulz

Read the following quotes from Charles Schulz and CHOOSE ONE. Then write about the quote and how it relates to the information about his childhood, as depicted in *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever.*

> "It just seems that if you hang on for a while longer, there is always something bright around the corner, or the dark clouds will go away and there will be sunshine again."

> "Do what is absolutely you and nobody else."

> "Be yourself. No one can say you're doing it wrong."

Just Like Sparky

Charles Schulz is widely regarded as one of the most influential cartoonist of all time.

Research one of these other famous cartoonists:

- Walt Disney

- Bill Watterson

- Jim Davis

- Bil Keane

- Ron Ferdinand

Possible sources for information:

- Nonfiction books
- Encyclopedias
- The Internet

Take notes and gather as much information as possible.

- Who was this person?
- Most significant events in their life.
- Legacy (their contributions to comics)

- Other fun facts
- When they first appeared as a cartoonist

Once the information is gathered, work to create either an illustrated poster or booklet of your findings. Include your opinion as to WHY this person was influential in comics.

Schulz's legacy

A eulogy is a speech that is often given at a funeral to highlight the key events of a person's life and their legacy or what they leave behind.

Write a eulogy for Charles Schulz.

Then, in groups of 3-4, create a "still or frozen image" of a statue to Schulz's memory.

Share these statues with the rest of the class as eulogies are read.