

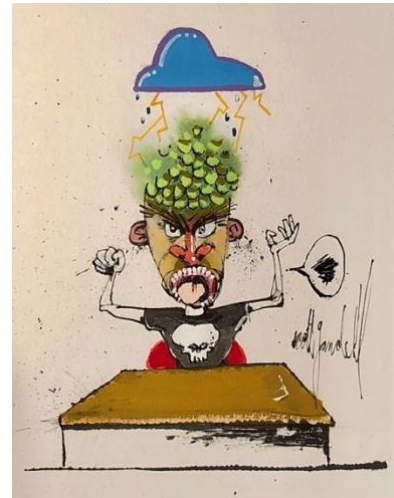
The Good Mr. Finn (7 minutes)

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Synopsis: The young narrator is a student at a rough middle school in Los Angeles. His temporary teacher, a condescending man, is hated universally by the class. The day before Spring Break, another student tries to punch him in the face. The teacher runs away never to be seen again. Their next temporary teacher is a gay man named Mr. Finn. To the shock of everyone, instead of being treated like all the other teachers, he wins the students over. Through kindness and hard work, Mr. Finn builds great trust with the class. But just like any temporary teacher, soon he leaves and a new teacher comes in.



Vocabulary

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| 1. commence | 5. ample |
| 2. haymaker | 6. scowling |
| 3. elusive | 7. condescension |
| 4. stray | 8. surreal |

Pre reading writing prompt

Write about a time you “rooted” for somebody... maybe your favorite sports team, or a friend or family member who plays in a band, or a stand-up comedian you saw at a show. How did it feel to cheer them on? Were the other people in the audience on your side, or against you? After the event, did you feel overjoyed... or defeated... or somewhere in between? Did you get a chance to talk to whoever you cheered for? How did they feel, or how do you think they felt?

Pre reading discussion prompt (class wide or in pairs)

What goes into creating one’s own identity? Is identity something they are born with, or something they develop as they grow older? What aspects of identity, in your opinion, can change? Do you believe certain aspects of people’s identity never change? Explain.

Reflect on your identity as a person. What, to this point, has helped shape your identity? When it comes to other people, do you gravitate toward people with a similar identity to yours, or different? Why do you think this is?

Post reading discussion questions (class wide or in pairs)

1. Do you think the class is right for wanting to “beat up” their teacher at the beginning of the story? Why or why not?
2. What kind of student do you think the narrator is? What things can you infer about the narrator from this story, despite there being very little description of him.
3. What kind of teacher do you think the students will get after Mr. Finn leaves? Do you think the class will accept or destroy their new teacher?
4. Why do you believe the narrator finds it necessary to mention the sexual preference of Mr. Finn? Do you believe this detail adds to the story, takes away from it, or lands somewhere in between.

Post reading writing reflection:

1. In a one page response, ***describe a time when you were caught off guard or surprised by something*** — similar to the unexpected nickname Mr. Finn gives to the narrator during roll call... or the way he positively motivates the class to work hard.

Be sure to include what led up to the moment, as well as what happened after. Use rich language to describe how you felt, as well as what you said and thought during the moment. Did this moment make you a stronger person after? Or did it leave you feeling uncertain or confused? Maybe you felt both these things at the same time... whatever the case, tell your story!