



# THREE-RING RASCALS: THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

KATE KLISE, ILLUSTRATED BY M. SARAH KLISE

This guide includes questions and activities aligned with the Common Core State Standards, grades 2–4



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

Sir Sidney is getting too tired to travel with his fantastic circus and his beloved friends: Leo the lion, Elsa the elephant, the Famous Flying Banana Brothers, and the small but helpful mice Bert and Gert. He advertises for a circus manager and finds a replacement named Barnabas Brambles. Once Sir Sidney leaves the circus, however, it's clear Barnabas Brambles is interested in one thing only: making money—for himself. He feeds the animals goopy goulash and schedules too many shows and too much travel. He even tries to trap Bert and Gert. Can the animals survive a week with Barnabas Brambles? If so, can they teach the new circus manager a trick or two?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

**KATE KLISE** lives and writes on her farm near Norwood, Missouri. She has written novels for adults and young readers, as well as picture books, many illustrated by her sister M. Sarah Klise. Their most recent series, *43 Old Cemetery Road*, has been nominated for reading awards in seventeen states and is a Junior Library Guild selection. When Kate isn't home writing, she is often visiting schools and libraries around the country.



Photo Credit: Dawn Shields

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:



**M. SARAH KLISE** draws and dwells in a Victorian cottage in Berkeley, California. Together with Kate Klise, she has created more than twenty award-winning books for young readers.





**COMMON CORE**

Reading: Literature

Connection to

**ANCHOR STANDARD**

RL.2.7

RL.3.7

R.7

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**1.** The author and illustrator of *The Show Must Go On!* use many tools and techniques, including narration, dialogue, illustrations, text messages, phone conversations, letters, to-do lists, songs, and even a recipe for goopy goulash. What do you learn about Barnabas Brambles from his dialogue on pages 18-23? What do you learn about him from the illustrations on pages 19 and 21? Do his to-do lists and phone conversations on pages 26 and 51 tell you more about him? If so, what? How do the words, documents, and illustrations in this book work together to reveal the character of Barnabas Brambles?

*"Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats . . ."*

**2.** At the beginning of the book (pages 2-3), we learn how Sir Sidney treats the members of his circus. As soon as Sir Sidney leaves, however, Barnabas Brambles begins making big changes. How are the ways Barnabas Brambles and Sir Sidney run the circus similar? How are they different? How do their personalities influence their decisions and behavior? How do the members of the circus respond to these very different characters? As you answer, remember to use examples from the book.

*"Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text."*

**3.** The Famous Flying Banana Brothers are acrobats, and the only human performers in Sir Sidney's Circus. What do the Famous Flying Banana Brothers think and say that tell you most about their personalities? How do these characters react to story events?

*"Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text."*

**4.** On page 15, Barnabas Brambles estimates that he'll make \$500 following Sir Sidney's directions for running the circus. The arithmetic on page 17 shows what will happen if he adds more shows and charges more for tickets. He can make \$26,250. Even though he's added and subtracted correctly, Barnabas Brambles doesn't end up with the money he expects. Why does he finish with \$1 in profit? (Hint: the answer might have something to do with situations and choices rather than Barnabas Brambles's ability to add and subtract numbers.)

*"Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it . . ."*

RL.2.3

RL.3.3

RL.4.7

R.3

RL.2.3

RL.3.3

RL.4.3

R.3

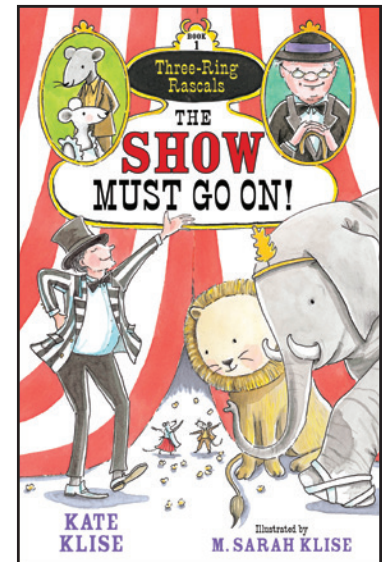


RL.2.1

RL.3.1

RL.4.1

R.1



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E-Book ISBN: 978-1-61620-311-5



**COMMON CORE  
State Standards**

Connection to

**ANCHOR STANDARD**

RL.2.4    RL.3.4

RL.4.4

R.4

5. On page 66, author Kate Klise says, “The heat of [Gert’s] small body was like a tiny hot water bottle on Leo’s sore tummy.” Why do you think Kate uses a simile here? What does it tell or suggest about the moment Gert and Leo share?

*“Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining . . . figurative meanings . . .”*

RL.2.1    RL.3.1

RL.4.1

R.1

SL.1

6. What does Barnabas Brambles say or do that makes him a bully? How do the different animals react to his bullying? What might you have done in their situation? Why?

*“Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it . . .”*

*“Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.”*

RL.2.1    RL.3.1

RL.4.1    SL.3.1d

SL.4.1d

R.1

SL.1

7. On page 28, Gert says to Bert, “Never trust a lion tamer in a poorly tailored suit. That’s my motto.” It isn’t until page 140 that Barnabas Brambles’s suit fits just right. Was it a well-tailored suit that made Barnabas Brambles a better man—or something else? Are you surprised that Sir Sidney was willing to give Barnabas Brambles a second chance? What does that say about Sir Sidney? Was there ever a time when you gave or were given a second chance? Use examples to help explain your answer.

*“Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it . . .”*

*“Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.”*

SL.3.1d    SL.4.1d

SL.1

8. Consider everything Barnabas Brambles does during the story, from making Leo sick to admitting he did things wrong. Was Sir Sidney’s choice to hire Barnabas Brambles a mistake? Why or why not?

*“Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.”*

RL.2.7    RL.3.7

R.7

9. Look at page 38, where Elsa and Leo are eating the first dinner Barnabas Brambles serves them. Now look at pages 138–139, where everyone in the circus is going out to dinner. How do the illustrations help the reader know more about the scenes? Would the story be different without the illustrations? How and why?

*“Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats . . .”*

SL.3.1d    SL.4.1d

SL.1

10. Barnabas Brambles hopes to make a great deal of money running Sir Sidney’s Circus, but he fails at his goal. Describe a time when you’ve failed to reach a goal. What did you learn from failing? How did failing change how you behaved afterward? Do you think Barnabas Brambles might have won something he hadn’t even known he wanted, such as a friend, a mentor, or a second chance? Investors, artists, and business people often talk about the importance of “failing up.” What do you think “failing up” means?

*“Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.”*





**COMMON CORE  
State Standards**

Common Core State Standards (Speaking and Listening) also addressed by all questions: SL.2.1a-c, SL.3.1a-d, SL.4.1a-d, SL.2.6, SL.3.6, SL.4.6

**Connection to  
ANCHOR STANDARD**

Connection to **Anchor Speaking and Listening Standard SL.1** *"Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively."*

Connection to **Anchor Speaking and Listening Standard SL.6** *"Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate."*

**ACTIVITIES:**

**Inventing Smafunderful Words**

Throughout the book, Gert makes up words like "dramastic" (p. 25), "plicken" (p. 95), and "smafunderful" (p. 137). Study how Gert invents words on pages 18, 24, 33, and 137. Then, just like she does, invent your own words. Write them along with their definitions on a large poster, and illustrate your new fabulous words. Hang your poster in your classroom or library for all to see.

L.2.5

L.3.5

L.4.5

L.5

*"Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings."*

**My Bully Story**

Think of a time when you were bullied, you saw bullying, or you bullied someone else. If you have never seen or met a bully, think of a movie, TV program, or book in which there's a bully. Using great details, write your bully story, including what happens to the bully and the person who was bullied.

W.2.3

W.3.3a-d

W.4.3a-e

W.3

*"Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences."*

**When I Joined the Circus**

Pretend you just spent the day at Sir Sidney's Circus learning new tricks. Write a story about your experiences. What tricks were you really good at performing? What was it like to meet the other performers? If possible, publish your story on your class website or blog, and include an illustration of your day at the circus.

W.2.3

W.3.3a-d

W.4.3a-e

W.3

W.6

*"Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events . . ."*

*"Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing . . ."*

**Who Is the Best Performer in Sir Sidney's Circus?**

When we finish *The Show Must Go On!*, we learn about Book 2 in the Three-Ring Rascals series, *The Greatest Star on Earth*. Based on what you've learned about the characters in Book 1, who do you think will win Polly Pumpkinseed's contest? Develop an opinion statement that answers this question, and gather quotations, events, and facts from Book 1 that help support your opinion. Then write an opinion essay about who you think will win Polly Pumpkinseed's contest. (Hint: you may need to develop your own criteria for what would make a performer the greatest star.)

W.2.1

W.3.1a-d

W.4.1a-d

W.1

*"Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts . . ."*



W.3.10

W.4.10

W.10

**Stupendous Circus Posters**

Working with your classmates, make circus posters that feature your class’s talents. For example: Come See the Spellbinding Spellers & Masterful Math Wizards in Ms. Howard’s Room! Visit the Kind & Curious Second Graders with First-Class Brains in Mr. Lorenzo’s Room! Put examples of your talents on your stupendous circus posters, illustrate these, and then post them on the walls of your school or library for all to see.

*“Write routinely . . . for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.”*

Common Core State Standards (Writing) also addressed by most activities:

W.3.4., W.4.4, W.2.5, W.3.5, W.4.5, W.2.6, W.3.6, W.4.6

Connection to **Writing Anchor Standard W.4** *“Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.”*

Connection to **Writing Anchor Standard W.5** *“Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.”*

Connection to **Writing Anchor Standard W.6** *“Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.”*



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**Make Your Own Circus Poster Here**

