

About Martin Bridge

Meet Martin Bridge — a most special and ordinary boy whose plans for a brilliant rocket, a substitute bus driver and a very old hamster go terribly wrong. In three illustrated stories, the daily rhythms, struggles and triumphs of childhood — at home, at school and with friends — are evoked with warmth, understanding, honesty and humor.

"Riddles"

In the story "Riddles," Mrs. Phips, Martin's cranky-pants bus driver, is sick and is temporarily replaced by Jenny — a kind, funny, hip young woman. Martin is smitten, and Jenny quickly wins over the others who ride her bus, too. Martin decides Jenny's passengers need to do something special for her and comes up with a plan to have the kids decorate her bus with tissue-paper flowers and, the *pièce de résistance*, a banner that proclaims her the "World's Best Driver." But the plan backfires when Mrs. Phips returns unexpectedly. Luckily, Mrs. Phips is happy, and none the wiser, and things turn out fine.



Class Discussion

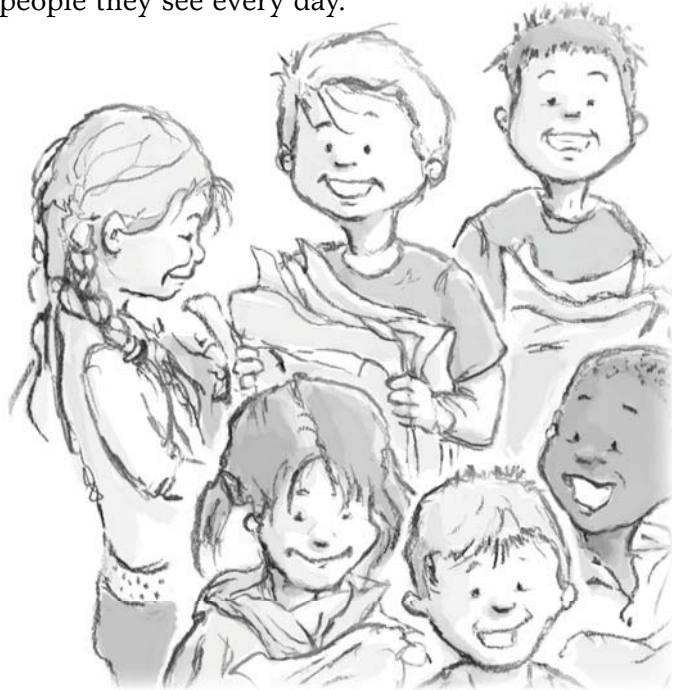
Martin thinks his regular school-bus driver, Mrs. Phips, is cranky and mean. He prefers Jenny, the substitute bus driver, because she is funny and hip.

With your class, discuss Martin's feelings toward both Jenny and Mrs. Phips. Why does Martin like Jenny more in the beginning of the story? Why do his feelings toward Mrs. Phips change by the end of the story?

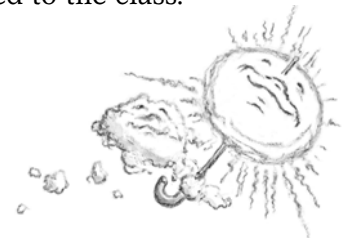


Getting to Know Members of Your Community

Just as Martin was pleasantly surprised when he got to know Mrs. Phips, your students' lives may also be enriched by getting to know some of the people they see every day.



Divide your class into small groups and ask them to find out more about the people that are a part of their school community (the principal, secretaries, teachers, assistant teachers, bus drivers, even students in other grades). Assign each group one person to interview within the school (make sure to check with each person first before assigning them to students). Have each group write down eight to ten interview questions. Some questions should relate to the person and their job (Why did you get into this profession? What do you do at your job? What is the most interesting thing about your job?). Some questions should also be about the person (What is your favorite color? What is your favorite food? Do you have a pet? What do you like to do in your free time?). Each group will have one week to conduct their interview and organize their information. At the end of the week, have each group present the information about the person they interviewed to the class.



"Faster Blaster"

In this story, there are two major events in Martin's life. Martin's Zip Rideout H₂O Faster Blaster goes missing — and since his parents don't like guns of any sort, they're prime suspects in the disappearance. And Ginny — his neighbor's pet hamster — dies while he's taking care of her. These two events come together in a funny and touching story about telling the truth.



If I Had a Pet, I Would ...

While Alice is away on vacation, Martin takes care of her pet hamster, Ginny, feeding and looking in on her every day. With your class, discuss the responsibilities of being a pet owner. As an individual writing assignment, ask your students to answer the questions on the activity sheet found at the end of this guide titled, "If I Had a Pet, I Would ...". They can write about a pet that they already own, one that they would like to own or they can create their own fantasy pet. Once they have completed the activity, have students share their answers with the rest of the class.



Special Banner

Martin and the other passengers decorate the bus with tissue-paper flowers and a special banner that reads "World's Best Driver" to show Jenny how much they appreciate her. As a class activity, ask each student to identify someone special in their life — a relative, friend, teacher, etc. — and create a banner for them. Encourage them to be creative and come up with their own special message or picture to include on the banner.

Riddle Board

Martin enjoys the riddles that Jenny shares with him on the morning drive to school so much that he shares them with his friends and classmates. Create your own classroom riddle board using bristol board or corkboard. Ask your students to bring in a new riddle each week to add to the board. Students should write the riddle on one side and the answer to the riddle, along with their name, on the other. Choose a time and a day of the week for "riddle time." It should take up no more than ten to fifteen minutes of class time. During "riddle time," read a riddle aloud to the class, then ask the class to solve the riddle. If no one in the class is able to solve the riddle, ask the student who brought in the riddle to reveal the answer to the class.

Class Discussion

While driving to the pet store with his dad to buy a new hamster for Alice, Martin explains to his dad that he doesn't feel comfortable about not telling Alice that Ginny died. However, at the end of the story, when Martin has the opportunity to tell Alice the truth he finds it harder than he had thought it would be. With your class, discuss Martin's situation in the story. Ask students why they think Martin decided not to tell Alice the truth. Ask students if they would have made the same decision as Martin or told the truth. Why?

Also, ask students to discuss why Martin thinks his parents aren't telling him the truth about his missing Faster Blaster. How does Martin feel about this? How does he act toward his parents? Have students share their own stories about a time when it was hard to tell the truth.

How Does Martin Feel?

Martin experiences many different emotions while trying to find his Faster Blaster and coping with the death of Ginny. As an individual class assignment, ask students to complete the activity sheet found at the end of this guide titled, "How Does Martin Feel?" Have students look at each picture of Martin and fill in a few sentences in the space provided naming Martin's emotion and what made him feel this way. (Students should refer back to the stories for this information.) Have students share their own story about a time when they felt happy, sad, mad or excited, and share their own facial expression to match those feelings.



"Smithereens"

The Junior Badgers are building model rockets to launch at the park on Saturday. Martin's is perfect. Alex's is a disaster, but Martin's suggestion to improve it by painting flames on it sets Alex up for triumph and a week of glory. Martin had the idea to decorate the model rocket with flames. So why did his best friend Alex use the idea for his own rocket without so much as a thank-you? Now everyone at school loves Alex's rocket, and Martin has to come up with an even better idea in time for Saturday's launch. It won't be easy. And he might lose a friend in the process.



Class Discussion

Using the argument between Martin and Alex in the story "Smithereens" as an example, discuss conflict and resolution with your class. Why did Martin and Alex have an argument? How did Martin and Alex resolve their argument? Have the class share their own stories about when they got into an argument with a friend, and answer the following questions: What was the argument about? How was the argument resolved? What did they learn from it?

Who Is Your Favorite Superhero?

Martin's favorite superhero is Zip Rideout. Ask the class to explain why Zip Rideout is Martin's favorite superhero? (Ask them to include an example from one of the stories.) Then ask the class if they have a superhero that they look up to (this can be a real-life person or a character like Zip). Ask them to explain why this person or character is their hero. Have each student create a character sketch of a superhero (or person) they admire.

Blast Off

In the story "Smithereens," the Junior Badgers have taken their rockets to Tupper Grove Park to launch. However, both Alex and Martin's rockets explode because the fuel cells were too big for their rockets.

Have your class build and decorate their own paper airplanes, either in groups or individually. Once everyone has completed their airplanes, pick a launch date with the class, and on that day have each person or group launch their airplanes outside or in the gym. Bring along a measuring tape and a stopwatch, and ask students to use these instruments to record information about their launch. For example, students can use the measuring tape to record how far their airplane traveled from its launch position to its landing. Students can use the stopwatch to record how long their airplanes stayed in the air. Have students record all of their observations.

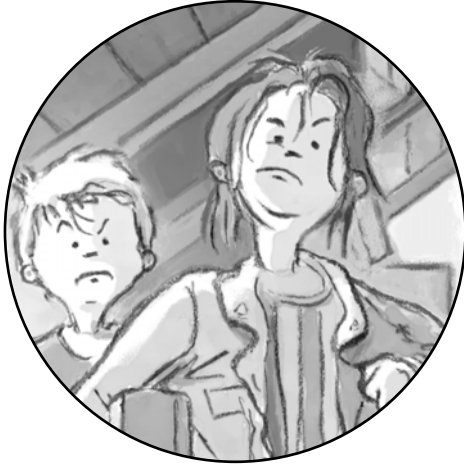
If the launch takes place outside, have students record if the weather affected their airplane launch. At the end of the launch, in class, ask students to think about what they might have done to make their airplanes fly better, longer, higher or farther.

Once they have organized all of their information from the launch, have students pair up and share their paper airplane designs and launch observations with each other.

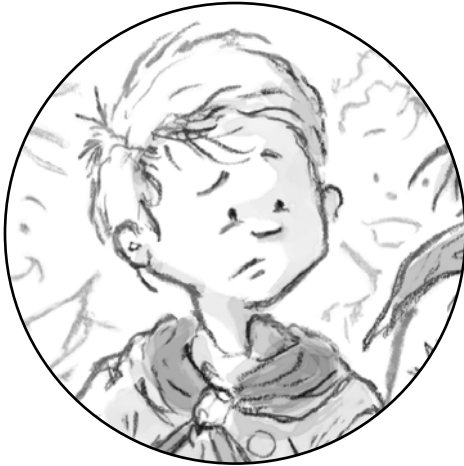


How Does Martin Feel?

Is Martin happy? Nervous? Sad? Angry? Bored? Once you have identified how Martin feels, write a sentence explaining why he feels that way.









IF I Had a Pet, I would . . .

In this activity, think of a pet that you would like to own and take care of. You can write about a pet that you already own, you can write about a pet you would like to own or you can create your own fantasy pet.

Once you have thought up a pet, complete the following statements about your pet:

My pet would be a _____

My pet's name would be _____

My pet would sleep/live _____

For exercise, my pet would _____

If I had questions about how to take care of my pet, I would ask _____

To take care of my pet, I would have to _____

In the box below, draw a picture of you with your pet.



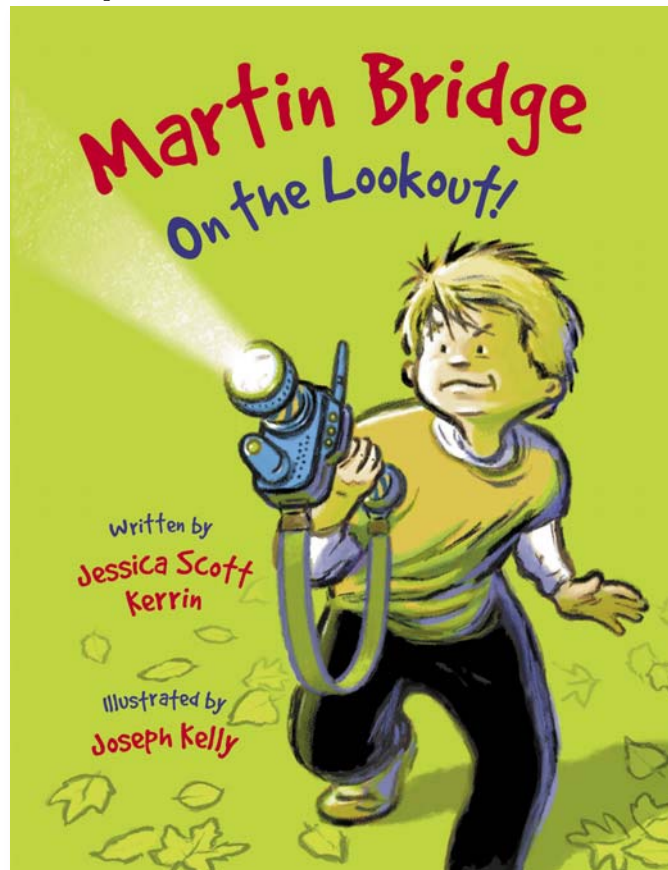
About the Author

Jessica Scott Kerrin is a freelance magazine writer and a full-time arts administrator. She lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her husband, Peter, and son, Elliott.

About the Illustrator

Joseph Kelly grew up all over the world and now works as a commercial and industrial artist in Northern California.

Currently available



Stay tuned for new adventures with Martin and his friends in *Martin Bridge: On the Lookout!*

This new book features three more exciting stories about Martin's well-laid plans unraveling. In "Yesterday's Party," an unwanted guest forces Martin to break his long-planned afternoon with his two best friends. In "Field Trip," while his classmates visit the new dinosaur exhibit at the museum, Martin must spend the day with a teacher from last year and Clark, a boy who will eat anything on a dare. In "Polly," the school's pet parakeet escapes, and Martin and his friends embark on a madcap search to find her.



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