

Teachers' Notes

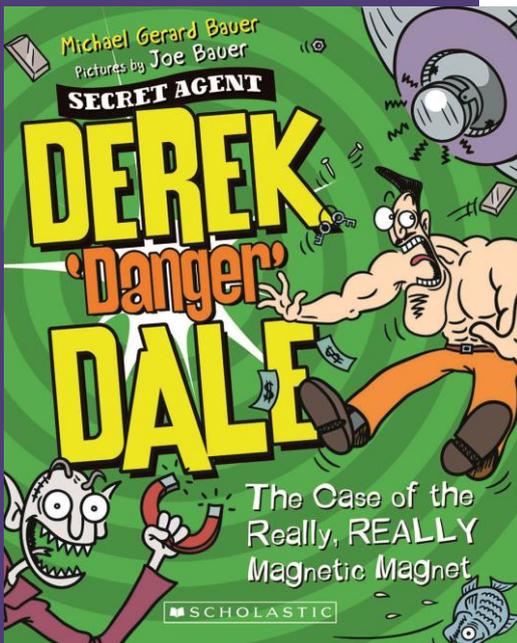
Secret Agent Derek 'Danger' Dale and the Case of the Really, REALLY Magnetic Magnet

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
About the Author	2
About the Illustrator.....	2
Before Reading the Text.....	2
Reading the Text.....	3
After Reading the Text.....	7
Extension Activities.....	8



OMNIBUS BOOKS

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Illustrator	Joe Bauer
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Previous publications

Michael Gerard Bauer & Joe Bauer

Secret Agent Derek 'Danger' Dale: The Case of the Really, Really Scary Things

(Omnibus Books, 2015)

Secret Agent Derek 'Danger' Dale: The Case of Animals Behaving Really, Really Badly

(Omnibus Books, 2014)

Eric Vale – Off the Rails

(Omnibus Books, 2013)

Eric Vale – Super Male

(Omnibus Books, 2013)

Eric Vale – Epic Fail

(Omnibus Books, 2012)

Michael Gerard Bauer

Ishmael and the Hoops of Steel

(Omnibus Books, 2011)

You Turkeys! (Omnibus Books, 2010)

Just a Dog (Omnibus Books, 2010)

Dinosaur Knights (Omnibus Books, 2009)

Ishmael and the Return of the Dugongs

(Omnibus Books, 2007)

Don't Call Me Ishmael!

(Omnibus Books, 2006)

The Running Man

(Omnibus Books, 2004)

Introduction

Everyone's favourite shirtless Secret Agent, Derek 'Danger' Dale is back, ready to take on his arch nemesis the villainous Doctor Evil MacEvilness once again. Armed with nothing more than his towering sense of superiority, a small goon mask, and a penchant for interpreting things in a somewhat literal manner, Derek strides through the pages with indomitable self-assurance. Of course, this time round he also has to face a whole new set of bad guys as well. At least, they are probably bad guys. They are definitely not good guys. Will Derek be able to escape the trap that the Notoriously Nasty, but Nevertheless Nifty, Ninjas have set for him in time to stop MacEvilness, or will their presence finally tip the balance and let MacEvilness prevail?

About the Author

Michael Gerard Bauer was born in Brisbane. He taught at schools in the Brisbane–Ipswich region before resigning in 2000 to pursue his dream of being a published writer. He is the much awarded author of *The Running Man*, and the popular Ishmael books, including the third in the series, *Ishmael and the Hoops of Steel*.

About the Illustrator

Joe Bauer is a young filmmaker whose first feature *The Killage* has enjoyed international critical success. He has completed a second feature with his wife Rita called *Australiens*. Joe illustrated the three Eric Vale books.

Before Reading the Text

Class Discussion

While it is not necessary to have already read the Eric Vale books, or the first two Derek Dale adventures, mentioning that Derek was originally the creation of another fictional character, and that this is the third book starring Derek, would be of value. Ideas for questions to prompt discussion include:

- 1) Who has read any of the Eric Vale series?
- 2) What happened in the books?
- 3) What do you know about Derek Dale and his adventures from the Eric Vale books?
- 4) Who has read one of the previous Derek Dale books?

- 5) What happened in the first two books, and what do we know about Derek Dale from his adventures in them?
- 6) Who are some of the antagonists/villains in the previous books? Did Derek defeat them and if so how?
- 7) If you have read any books with Derek in them before, what sort of format would you predict that *Secret Agent Derek 'Danger' Dale and the Case of the Really, REALLY Magnetic Magnet* has (e.g. novel, graphics, layout, writing style)?
- 8) Looking at the cover art, what are some of the things that you think Derek might encounter in the story? What sort of problems can you predict him having to face?

Reading the Text

Part 1

Class Discussion

After reading the opening scene, discuss your initial impressions of the story and characters.

Some points to consider are:

- What impression does the opening sentence give of the setting?
- What can you predict of the opening scene based on the first sentence and the place listed at the top of the page? Hypothesise as to what Derek is doing.
- Were your predictions correct? Why do you think you could/couldn't predict the action from the opening sentence?
- How do the pictures enhance our understanding of the action?
- By page 3 Derek appears to be inescapably trapped. Do you think that he will be able to escape? Why do you think this?
- Who are the characters that have been introduced in the first chapter – which ones do you predict will be important to the story overall, and which do you think are just making a cameo appearance? Why do you think this?

Small Group Task

In the previous *Derek Dale* books, Derek has had to battle evil Doctor Evil MacEvilness and his goons, which has been more than enough of a challenge for any one secret agent. In this book, however, he also has to contend with another group of foes, the *Notoriously Nasty, but Nevertheless Nifty, Ninjas*. The Ninja leader clearly has what might best be described as mixed feelings about Derek. She traps him, intends to blow him up, and is dedicated to a life of lawlessness that he is determined to stop ... yet she also seems to be more than a touch admiring of him, and lets slip that she has pictures of him in her diary and on the walls of her room. Derek appears oblivious to her opinion of him: he ignores her invitation to sweet-talk his way out of trouble and only succeeds in infuriating her. In small groups discuss the introduction of a new set of antagonists into Derek's ongoing story.

Some points to consider are:

- Why might an author decide to introduce another set of antagonists into a story?
- What effect does having another group of actors have on a plot line?
- What difficulties might this cause for an author?
- What are the benefits to the story – and for the reader?
- What things does an author need to consider, and be careful about when they add extra characters, secondary plot lines and other complications?
- What, in your opinion, does the inclusion of the Ninjas in Derek's world add to the story?
- What are some of the similarities and differences between Doctor MacEvilness' group and the Ninjas? Consider their purpose in terms of plot development, the methods that they employ, and the personal characteristics and aims of the groups' leaders.
- How does the presence of more than one group of antagonists affect plot tension in this book? How might it affect plot tension in books in general?

Individually choose one or two discussion points and write a paragraph summarising your group's conclusions on these points. As a group collate individuals' paragraphs into a piece discussing the benefits and drawbacks of increased numbers of antagonists within a story. As a class share your analyses with each other. Did every group reach the same conclusions? Why/why not?

Extension Activities

Bauer has made good use of alliteration in his naming of the Ninja group. Reread the first chapter and see how many other instances of alliteration you can identify.

Individually, create a name for an organisation that uses as much alliteration as you can manage. Write a short story featuring your organisation. You can choose to have your characters be villains or heroes, or for a challenge you can try to write a story where they are a bit of both!

Literary Component

The Ninja leader admits to keeping a diary during her first conversation with Derek. Write diary entries describing the events in the book from her point of view. Remember, you can include all her thoughts and feelings about him, which she was trying very hard to conceal from Derek.

Part 2

Class Discussion

On page 41 Derek can't remember the name of an asterisk, and calls it a *spiky starry spokey wheely thing*. Discuss the way that Bauer has taken a series of nouns and turned them into a lengthy adjectival description of an asterisk.

Some things to consider are:

- What are the base nouns that were used to form these adjectives?
- What has been added to the noun to make it an adjective?
- Can this be done to any noun?
- Do all adjectives with a 'y' ending have a noun or verb form as well?
- Are there other endings that can be added to nouns that turn the word into an adjective, and what are they? (Hint: look at the title of the book)
- While *spiky* is a fairly common adjective, *wheely* and *spokey* are not. In your opinion, how typical is this type of adjective within character dialogue in general? What impression of the character does this word usage give to the reader? Why might an author choose to use this type of language?

Small Group Task

Choose a chapter of *Derek Dale* and see how many instances of this type of non-typical adjective formation you can find. Write down the details of each usage, and create a chart to show any patterns in usage that you can find. Details to record for each instance include:

- The base noun or verb.
- The adjective.
- Whether or not the adjective is used in isolation, or as part of a string of adjectives.
- Whether or not the adjective is being used in dialogue or in a descriptive passage.
- If the adjective is being used in dialogue, which character is using it?

Share your findings with the class and discuss any patterns that you can observe. Is one character more likely to use this sort of language than the others? If so, why do you think that the author has chosen to do this? What impression of a particular type of character does this type of language use give to the reader?

Research Task

Look at a standard computer keyboard. How many different symbols are on it, and how many do you know the names of? Individually, or in pairs or small groups, write down the names of as many of the symbols as you can, and research the names of the others – be aware that some of the symbols might have more than one name! When are the different symbols likely to be used, and why? Research the various uses of the symbols, and see how many different uses for each symbol you can identify. Draw up a table to display your findings and share it with the class.

Literary Component

Write a story inspired by Derek and his adventures where at least one of the main characters uses long strings of adjectives to describe common objects. See how many unusual, yet accurately descriptive, adjectives you can create!

Part 3

Class Discussion

In the first scene, Derek is trapped beneath a dome with a time-bomb ticking away. He manages to escape from the dome because, as he says ‘bombs blow up’... so he places the bomb on his chest and lies down under it. In reality, although we may say that bombs ‘blow up’, they actually explode in all directions at once. Many common prepositions such as *in*, *out*, *on*, *under*, *over*, *up*, and *down* are used to indicate location in space, direction of travel, and location in relation to other objects – but also have a wide range of figurative uses as well. These figurative uses vary between different dialects of English, even within the same group of speakers sometimes! Some examples of this are:

- ‘I went to the zoo **on** the weekend’
- ‘I got here just **in** time’
- ‘pens down – you are **out** of time’
- ‘He’s been **under** pressure lately’
- ‘I’m **over** the whole situation’
- ‘I’m going **down** the road to see Susie’
- ‘Mum has just gone **up** the road’
- ‘The dynamite was used to blow **up** the old factory’
- ‘You are **in** big trouble now!’
- ‘I expect you to stay **out** of trouble’
- ‘My little brother is always getting **up** to mischief’
- ‘My little sister is always getting **into** mischief’
- ‘Everyone line **up** behind Jo’
- ‘Stay **in** line everyone’
- ‘You did that **on** purpose’

As a class discuss the meaning of the phrases listed above. Some points to consider are:

- What is the commonly accepted meaning of each phrase?
- What could it mean if you tried to interpret it literally, as Derek might?
- Is this a usage that you have in your own dialect of English?
- Would you say any of these in a different way, or use a different preposition (for example, some people say ‘at the weekend’ while others say ‘on the weekend’)?

Group Research Task

Sometimes people can get quite confused when they are talking to each other about when something happened or will happen. As a class, survey as many people in your school as you can about what they understand *this thursday*, *next thursday*, and *last thursday* to mean. You will want to use a calendar with ‘today’ marked very clearly on it, and ask them to point to the different days. For the second part of the survey, ask whether they would say *on the weekend*, or *at the weekend* – or if they use both at different times.

Collate your results to create a class graph showing what you found. As a class discuss your results, and hypothesise as to what might have contributed to them. For example, if you live in a large urban area with a lot of different cultures represented in your school, you will probably have more variety in the answers you get than if you live in a small rural town where everyone speaks the same regional dialect of English.

Extension Activities

Choose a book from the school library that is set in a different English-speaking country. See how many examples you can find of characters using *in*, *out*, *on*, *under*, *over*, *up*, and *down* in ways that you wouldn't use them. Share your examples with the class, and discuss both the meaning of the phrase, and what phrase you would use instead.

Literary Component

Write a short story where at least one of the characters interprets phrases such as *blow up* literally. See how funny you can make your character's adventures – you might choose to have things work out for them, like they did for Derek, or your character could keep having problems when they realise they misunderstood the meaning of a phrase. Illustrate your story with a sidebar of comic-strip style drawings inspired by the illustrations in *Derek Dale*.

After Reading the Text

Class Discussion

Discuss what your overall impressions of the story were. Some points to talk about are:

- What did you enjoy about the story?
- Were there any parts that you found challenging or confusing?
- What was your favourite scene, and why?
- What do you think of the way the story ended? Did Derek deserve to beat Doctor MacEvilness, or was he unreasonably lucky?
- Who do you think is the most amusing character?
- Who is your favourite character?
- What was the funniest part of the story – and what did the author and illustrator do to help make it amusing?
- Which character did you find the least appealing? Why?

Literary Component

In the final chapter, the Ninja leader lets Doctor MacEvilness know that her ninjas are raiding his headquarters. How do you think this scene would have played out if it had been included in the book? Would the Ninjas beat the goons, or would the goons successfully defend their headquarters? What complications would each group have faced? Write and illustrate this scene as you imagine it happening. Try to use a similar writing style to Bauer, and be sure that your illustrations complement the textual narrative.

Extension Activities

- 1) On page 22 Derek had to cope with identifying six different wires, each of which was a slightly different shade of not-quite-white.
 - How many different ways can you think of, or have you heard used, to describe colours that are almost, but not quite, white? Make a list of as many as you can think of.
 - English has more basic colour words than most languages, words which only describe a colour, and aren't taken from an object. For example *red* is a basic colour word, while *violet* comes from the colour of the flower. How many of the eleven basic colour words can you think of? (Note: *orange* is actually a basic colour word, and was used in English before oranges were known of.) How many other colour words can you think of, and can you identify where they come from?
- 2) The Ninja leader has read about Derek in a magazine called *Spy Monthly* while Doctor MacEvilness left a copy of *Bad Guy Weekly* in his cell when he escaped. What sort of advertisements, articles, and features do you think these magazines are likely to have? In pairs or small groups, work to publish a humorous page or two of one of these fictional magazines. Each page should contain an article, an advertisement, and some illustrations. Collate your pages together into a magazine for the whole class to enjoy.
- 3) The word MAGNETIC in the title of the story is both an acronym for MacEvilness' new secret weapon, and an actual word that describes a Magnet. Invent acronyms for other common objects. Some possibilities you might like to use are *TOASTING toaster*, *VACUUMING cleaner*, *FASTENING stapler*, *COLD fridge*, *HEATED oven*, or you can think of your own. Remember, the words used to form the acronym also have to describe your object as well as the acronym itself!
- 4) Derek has to pledge to pay back \$225 million if the gold gets stolen. Research the current price of gold. How much gold would this many Australian dollars really buy? For a challenge see if you can work out:
 - What would the volume as well as the weight of this much gold be?
 - How many 10 kg bricks of gold would you have?
 - What would be an object of equivalent weight? Would the gold weigh the same as a car? A whale? A small dog?
 - What would be the weight of a wooden table, and the weight of an equivalent sized gold table?
- 5) Are the Ninjas a group of good guys, or a group of bad guys? Write an argument for or against them being good guys in the context of the story. Set out your argument logically, and be as persuasive as you can.

- 6) In small groups, choose a scene from the story and then act it out for the class. You might want to perform some of the funnier scenes at your next school assembly!
- 7) Even though Derek and the Ninja Leader are both adults, they are still extremely fond of Derek's Ninjarator toy. Survey the adults in your life about which toys were their favourites as children, and if there are any toys that they wish they still have, and think they would enjoy playing with as adults. You may want to brainstorm a list of survey questions first with your class, and display the class results in graph or table form.
- 8) In small groups investigate magnets. What do they attract? What happens when you put two magnets together? How much weight will a magnet lift? Can you make something jump off a table and stick to a magnet? Can you make something move across a table without touching it?
- 9) Make a simple electromagnet. You can find clear instructions at <http://education.jlab.org/qa/electromagnet.html>, or you can search online to find your own. Be careful though – electromagnets and the batteries powering them can get very hot!
- 10) As a class make a wall display showcasing the book. Individually draw or paint pictures of a character, event, or gadget from the story, and write a review of the novel to accompany your picture. Arrange the artwork and reviews around a copy of the front cover of the book.