



# TEACHERS' NOTES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle to upper primary  
(Years 4-6)

## CONTENTS

1. Plot summary 1
2. About the author 2
3. A note from Morris Gleitzman 2
4. Story discussion notes 2 - 7
5. General questions 7
6. More short story collections 8
7. Order form 9

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Humanities & Social Sciences; The Arts; Technologies; Health and Physical Education; Science; Mathematics.
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; information and communication technology; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capabilities; ethical understanding; intercultural understanding.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analyse how language and writing can evoke mood, tension and characterisation
- Use of humour and figurative devices
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing
- Understanding relationships and stress, discussing resilience, perseverance and the power of human connection
- Discuss social and economic inequality.

## THEMES

- Hope
- Family issues
- Friendship
- Resilience
- Role of authority
- Courage
- Taking action
- Loss and grief

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and Jean Yates.

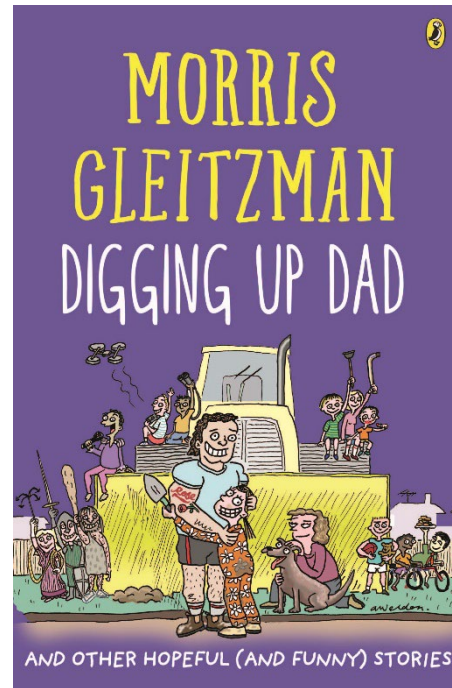
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9781760890940 (paperback);  
9781760148676 (ebook)

**These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.**

Visit [penguin.com.au/teachers](http://penguin.com.au/teachers) to find out how our fantastic Penguin Random House Australia books can be used in the classroom, sign up to the teachers' newsletter and follow us on [@penguineachers](https://twitter.com/penguineachers).

Copyright © Penguin Random House Australia 2022



## Digging Up Dad

Morris Gleitzman

## PLOT SUMMARY

Another winning set of short stories from one of our best-loved authors, on a theme for our times – kids helping adults to be their best selves. Funny hopeful stories just when we need all the hope and humour we can get!

Brilliantly funny short stories for middle school readers from the ever-popular Morris Gleitzman, in the hilarious style of *Give Peas a Chance*, *Pizza Cake* and *Snot Chocolate!*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morris Gleitzman grew up in England and came to Australia when he was sixteen. After university he worked for ten years as a screenwriter. Then he had a wonderful experience. He wrote a novel for young people. Now, after 43 books, he's one of Australia's most popular authors. He was appointed the Australian Children's Laureate for 2018–2019.

## A SPECIAL NOTE FROM MORRIS GLEITZMAN

*Eagle-eyed readers will have spotted a word in the title of this book that isn't in the titles of any of my other short story collections.*

*Hopeful.*

*It could have been, I guess. All my stories are about young people trying to make things better - in their lives and/or the lives of their families, pets, teachers, neighbours, local shopkeepers, members of parliament etc. And they probably wouldn't give it a try if they weren't hopeful of succeeding.*

*But when I sat down to write the stories in this book, I found myself thinking about how everyone's problems seem to be a bit bigger these days. And more complicated. And perhaps harder to fix. And when I say everyone, that includes our planet.*

*The truth is, we grown-ups don't always feel as confident as we used to about making things better. Some days we need a bit of help to feel hopeful. Those are the days we're extra grateful there are young people in the world.*

*Writing these stories has made me feel much more hopeful, which is why I put the word in the title. I also did it to remind young readers that if they come across a grown-up who's not having a very hopeful day, sharing these stories with them might just help.*

*I hope it does.*

## DISCUSSION

### Great Great Great

#### Questions and activities

- Where does the narrator spend every Thursday afternoon?
- The narrator in this story is never given a name or gender. Why do you think this might be the case? Do you think it is a boy or a girl? Why?
- Why do we like to know who our ancestors are?
- How does your family and ancestry shape your personal identity?
- How many greats can you trace your family back to? Complete your own family tree as far back as you can.
- What qualities does the narrator seem to have inherited from the ancestors?
- Why are stories more valuable than expensive jewels, such as diamonds and emeralds?
- How does Gleitzman weave the old language and the new in the 'greats' stories? What is the impact?
- Why are people afraid of spiders?
- What skills do spiders have?
- How does the story show that things (like spiders) aren't so terrifying when you encounter them?
- Why would the narrator need to be brave?
- How would it feel to visit your father in jail?
- Why does the narrator give the father a spider? How might the spider help him?
- Why does Dad need his family behind him? What does this mean?
- The novel uses the narrative device of foreshadowing – when the author provides hints throughout the story that all pull together and are explained right at the end.
- Consider what elements of foreshadowing you find in this story
  - Courage
  - Bravery
  - Theft
  - Spiders
  - Importance of family
  - Love
  - Rescues
  - Breaking out of prisons

Read the story a second time and see how you interpret these 'clues' differently now that you know the whole story.



## Fake Nudes

### Questions and activities

- What special connections do twins often share? Why have they often been the subjects of studies?
- Why are the twins so convinced that their neighbours are either nudists or aliens?
- Why do we make up rumours about people if we don't know the truth?
- Why do the twins remind their mother that information on social media needs to be fact checked? Why is it important not to believe everything we read online?
- What are conspiracy theories and why do many people believe them? Make a list of any conspiracy theories you have heard of.
- Why is the twins' mother struggling?
- What does the story suggest about problems caused by Covid19?
- How do the neighbours react to being spied upon? What might be surprising about this?
- What is the truth about Jock and Wil's neighbours?
- How do the twins hope to solve everyone's problems?
- What does this story suggest about the dangers of rumours and making assumptions about people?
- Make a Venn diagram comparing what the twins suspected about their neighbours and what they find out to be the truth.
- Write a short story of your own about someone who turns out not to be as dangerous as the rumours suggested.

## Big hands little hands

### Questions and activities

- Audrey can't understand why anyone would need a watch as expensive as her father's. Do you agree or disagree with her?
- For Audrey's father, it's not just about the watch itself. What does an expensive watch symbolise?
- Select an advertisement from a printed text or tv. Consider what promises the advertisement makes if you buy the expensive item.
- Audrey says her father often says his work is not about the money. 'I just love helping people.' Do

you believe this is true? What evidence is there in the story that it might not be?

- What does it mean that salespeople tell people 'what they want to hear'? Why might they do this?
  - Why do Audrey's parents go quiet when she talks about Gina?
  - Why is Audrey upset by how much money her father spent on the watch. What does she want him to do with it?
  - How would you describe the real estate agents that Dad invites home for drinks?
  - Consider this quote from the story: 'Poor Dad. A little while ago in the living room, he got some very important knowledge. Which must have been very painful for him. He had to admit the world won't think you're as rare and precious as the expensive watch on your wrist, not if most of the people wearing them have got showy-off teeth and very rude manners.'
- Do expensive clothing, jewellery and other possessions make you a better person? Why?
- Consider the gift Gina leaves behind. What does it symbolise?
  - Why does Audrey take all of the watches to the hospice?
  - Why might adults be more likely to lose sight of what is important than children are?
  - How do her parents react?
  - How do the other estate agents react?
  - Why does Audrey give her father Gina's watch? What message will it remind him of?
  - What important 'timepiece' is Audrey referring to at the end of the story?
  - What is the most important aspect of time?
  - Research 5 of the richest people in the world and see what they spend their money on. Create a poster to convince people with money to donate it to those who really need it.
  - Make a poster, reminding people of the important things we need in our lives. What do we really need in order to be 'rich' and admirable?



## Burger Buns Behaving Badly

### Questions and activities

- Ludo gives himself time each Sunday morning to feel sad about his Mum and to worry about his Dad. What does this suggest about his personality?
- What does Ludo suggest most politicians want to do when they first get the job?
- How does the job affect them and stop them from being the people they wanted to be?
- Why does Mrs B suggest that politicians squabble with each other?
- Politicians are elected to represent and serve the people. Who do they often end up looking after?
- Why does Ludo suggest that his dad is less argumentative because he's an independent?
- What are the different parties in our government? How might being a member of a specific party influence the decisions you make and the way you behave?
- Ludo asks 'How could MPs hope to get good things done if people didn't know they were tragically work damaged and just thought they were embarrassing and ridiculous?'. Why might politicians appear to be embarrassing and ridiculous? In what way are these politicians 'work damaged'?
- Why do politicians 'tell lies in public?' and 'try to make people scared of stuff they don't have to be scared of?'
- In what way does Henry suggest politicians are like burger buns?
- Why does Miss MacTavish suggest that being a schoolteacher is not much different from looking after politicians?
- What qualities are needed in a good school teacher?
- What rules or values are enforced in school that need to be remembered by our politicians?
- Why did the teachers create a club for those who have taught students who have gone on to become politicians?
- Why are they disappointed in them?
- How do you think the teachers managed to change the behaviour of their former students at the luncheon?

- What do you think Merl said to Alice's dad? Write their dialogue.
- Why does Ludo like the score 9/10?

## Digging Up Dad

### Questions and activities

- Why is Rosie upset when her mum tells her they have to move out of their rental property?
- How does Rosie try to convince her landlords to let them stay?
- Consider the description of Rosie visiting her landlords' house at the beginning of this story. How are they shown to be different? Do you think there is any way they would understand Rosie's situation and allow her to stay in the house?
- Have you ever moved house? What is the hardest part of moving?
- How would you feel if the ashes of a loved one were in your garden?
- What sort of life do you think Rosie and her mum have had? What evidence can you find to support your answer?
- Why does Rosie like having her dad around her? What sort of relationship do they have?
- Why did Rosie's Mum tell her that her father had died?
- Do you think a parent should lie to a child like this?
- Consider the relationship Rosie might have had with her father. How would she feel about him if:
  1. he had been around, like Alyssa's father
  2. she had been told the truth that he had abandoned her and her mother out of fear.
- Does this make you change your opinion as to whether it was the right thing to do?
- These sorts of lies are often called white lies. We tell them in order to protect the other person's feelings. Do you think it is ever appropriate to tell even white lies?
- Where is Coober Pedy? Why would there be a lot of excavators there?
- What sort of person do you think Rosie's dad might be living and working in Coober Pedy?
- Why do you think Rosie's dad answered her request?



- How would Rosie feel about finally meeting her dad?
- Imagine that you are:
  1. Rosie
  2. her mum
  3. her dad

Write a diary entry for the night Rosie's dad arrives. How would you be feeling? What would be good or bad about the situation? What might you hope for now?

### **I Love Boof**

#### **Questions and activities**

- Is it ok for children who are 11 or older to still hang onto their childhood toys?
  - Do parents have the right to determine when they need to get rid of them?
  - Why might Nate's parents be concerned that he still has his teddy?
  - What does Boof offer Nate that his parents can't provide?
  - Why does Nate like the fact that Boof never tells him not to worry or that things will sort themselves out?
  - What sort of concerns does Nate have?
  - How does this suggest that he is far more mature than his parents fear he is?
  - Why are all the parents meeting at Gareth's place?
  - 'We're working our guts out,' said Harley. 'Not being scared. Keeping our nerve. Trying to get ready for the future. And we're lucky cause we've all got loved ones who listen and trust us and inspire us...Loved ones,' she said, 'who don't try to protect us too much. And who don't tell us what to do and how to think.'
- Who is Harley referring to in this quote? When Nate and the other children talk to their toys, the toys can't answer back. What does this force the children to do?
- The parents are trying to protect their kids and do the best for them. How do they unwittingly fail to support them?
  - In order to grow and mature, what qualities does a child need to develop?
  - What actions from their parents might stop them developing these qualities?

- Imagine that at their meeting, the children decided to write a training guide to help parents understand what their children need for them. Write the guide.
- Why did the police officer ask for a spare toy for the Divisional Commander?
- What does this suggest about support toys? Are they just for babies?
- How could all of their parents benefit from having their own special toys?

### **Biggies Behaving Better**

#### **Questions and activities**

- How has Grandpa's behaviour changed recently? List any evidence provided by the children, Nanna and Barry.
- Why does Rueben fear that his grandpa's pipes are all blocked?
- Why are mental worries harder to cure than physical illnesses?
- Why do you think Grandpa won't talk about what is upsetting him – even to Nanna?
- What is ironic in Grandpa being grumpy about the idea that people won't remember him fondly when he dies?
- Why has Grandpa cut himself off from all of his friends?
- Grandpa says that he has become grumpy because of the state of the world. Make a list of the things that might be making him upset.
- How do the children help remind their grandpa that he will be remembered?
- How does their action help to assure him that the world is in better hands than he thought?
- Draw a picture of the statue that Barry builds for Grandpa.
- How does each element symbolise a different gift that Grandpa gave everyone?
- Choose one of the things in our world that Grandpa might be worried about. Create a campaign to encourage people to do something to make a difference.

### **Does My Mum Look Big In This?**

#### **Questions and activities**

- How does Millie describe Bogley's swimming pool at the beginning of this story?



This writing technique is called hyperbole – when images are exaggerated for effect. What effect does the use of hyperbole have in this description?

- What is the swimming pool like in Millie's town?
- Why has it been upgraded?
- Mum explains to Millie that they need to leave the Bogley pool as it is 'Tradition,' says Mum. 'Bogley's swimming pool is a precious crucible of rural tradition. It's a living piece of history. A national treasure.'

What does this actually mean?

In what way does this sound like the sort of excuse that politicians often use to justify their behaviour? What impact does language like this have on people?

- Why can't politicians just provide equipment for the towns that need it the most?
- Is this a fair way to govern?
- How should public money be distributed?
- Why do politicians do what they know will win them votes?
- What does this suggest happens in our society?
- What happens to towns that never back the party of the politician in power?
- Should politics be about popularity?
- Millie's mother tells her, 'Sometimes I get to do good things. And sometimes I have to do bad things.' In what ways might politicians have to do bad things?
- 'We have to look after the people who are important to us.' Which people are seen as being 'important'?
- After their initial shock, why are Millie's parents not mad at her for transferring the money?
- Why does Mum write a check for a swimming pool in Bogey? What is the difference between how she can behave as a mum and how she can behave as a politician?
- Why does Mum finally get into the pool with Millie? What does this symbolise?
- How are the ideas in this story linked to those in *Burgers Behaving Better*? What does this suggest about the link between local and federal politics?
- The title of this story is a pun or a play on words. What is the original phrase? How is this version appropriate for this story?

## Amazing Things

### Questions and activities

- What is surprising about Bernard's reaction to cars?
- Why is the speeding man so cranky?
- Many of the characters in this story are household items that have been sent to the tip. Think of another item that may have been thrown away. Give them a name and personality as Gleitzman has done with his characters.
- Why did the man and his wife take all of the toys to the dump?
- Is it fair to blame the toys for what happened?
- Why do we blame others for our own mistakes?
- Write an example of an incident when you blamed someone for something you did wrong.
- How does the daughter feel about her brand new, huge tv?
- The toys and other objects want revenge for being thrown out. Would this make their behaviour any better than the father's?
- How do the characters all work together to help each other?
- Why were the parents happy to have all of the toys back?
- What is Bernard's new job?
- Why is he needed in this job? What role do speedbumps play?
- What does this story suggest about who is important in our lives? Is it people or 'things'.
- Do we usually treat our belongings as if they have feelings and thoughts?
- Imagine if all of your belongings could think, talk and move. What aspects of their lives might they like and not like? Write an adventure some of these objects could have.

## Babysitters Behaving Brilliantly

### Questions and activities

- Why do you think Aunty Erica really needs to have a good birthday dinner?
- Why do Shona and Gabe find babysitting the twins so hard?
- In what way might twins be harder to look after than children of different ages?



- Make a list of all the disasters that have occurred while Shona has been babysitting other children.
- Make a list of all the things that go wrong on the night that Shona and Gabe are babysitting.
- Did Shona and Gabe make the right decisions? What could they have done differently to handle the situation better?
- What evidence is there that this was always going to be a difficult evening?
- Was Shona right to take the car in order to find Daisy? Did she have any alternative option?
- Why is Auntie Erica so happy when she arrives home?
- How does this situation help her feel happier about her life?
- Should Shona and Gabe have told the true story about what happened? Why?
- What is ironic about this absolute disaster being the thing that helps her feel better?
- There are many examples of irony in this story. Make a list of anything you find ironic.
- Think of another problem that the twins might have created that night and write an extra scene for the story.
- Imagine that you are Shona and Gabe. Write a 'Babysitter's Guide Book' to help other babysitters know how to deal with potentially difficult situations.

### A Sorry Spectacle

#### Questions and activities

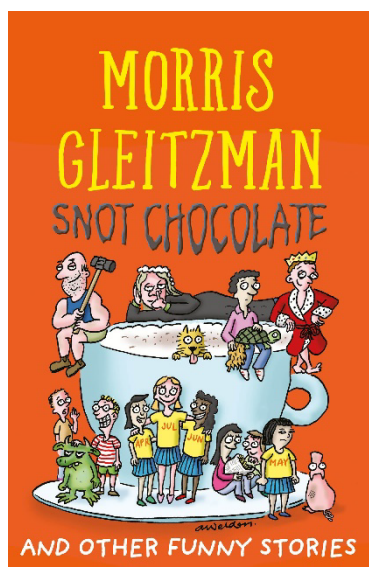
- What act were Kaz and her group supposed to perform in the concert?
- Why did Kaz decide to do an interpretation of the hygiene issue instead?
- Why do you think the other students went along with her idea? What does that suggest about Kaz as a character?
- How does the audience react to the performance? Why would they have been like this?
- How would the other children have felt about this reaction?
- How does Ms Domenico react to the performance?
- We often use theatre, dance and song as a form of social criticism or awareness. (Even The Wiggles and Playschool do this). Think of some other examples of this.
- How does Kaz use their act to inform her audience?
- Why does Ms Domenico insist that Kaz makes a formal apology to the audience?
- Kaz doesn't really understand why she has to apologise. Do you agree with making her do this?
- What does Mum mean when she says 'An apology is a gift that's worth more than it costs.'
- Kaz says that the only big apology she has ever heard has been from politicians or celebrities on television. What are their apologies usually like? What is often their aim in apologising?
- Why do people find Kaz' apology funny?
- Are apologies usually this honest?
- Why does Mrs Domenico not get angry at Kaz for this apology?
- Look at the pun in the title of this story. What do we usually mean by the phrase 'a sorry spectacle'? What does it mean in this instance?
- Do you believe that apologies always achieve what they are meant to achieve?

#### General questions

- How does Morris Gleitzman manage to create so many different characters? How does he vary the voice so that they are distinctly different people?
- Make a list of themes that recur throughout these stories.
- Some of these stories have strong messages. How does Gleitzman use humour to keep them entertaining?
- Why is humour an effective device when asking people to think about serious issues?
- Which of the stories in this collection is your favourite? Why?
- What did you learn from reading these stories? How does it suggest that children can help to make our world a better place?



MORE SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS FROM MORRIS GLEITZMAN



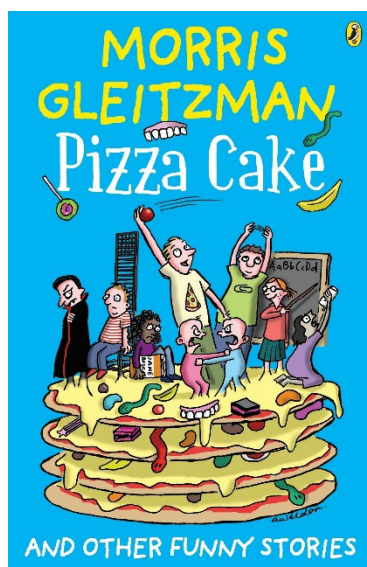
*Snot Chocolate*  
by Morris Gleitzman

VERY YUMMY STORIES.

Stop your mum picking her nose, read the secret diary of a dog, catch a bus and then let it go, discover how one slice of toast can make you the most popular person in school, start wearing a crown and give up eating pig-nostril gruel, use a wrecking ball to defeat a bully, show your big sister the very scary secret in your wardrobe, unleash the awesome power of chips, live in a house that gets wiped clean more often than a bottom.

Funny stories from a favourite Australian author.

*Teachers' notes available.*

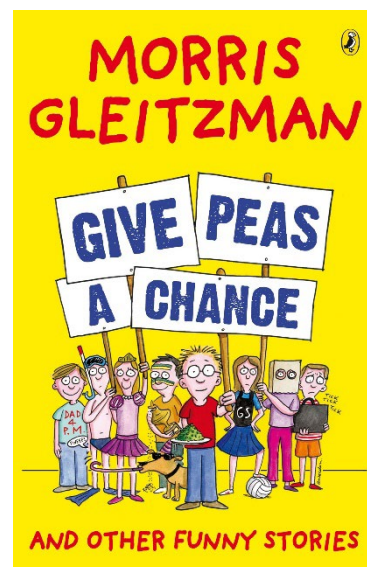


*Pizza Cake*  
by Morris Gleitzman

STORIES WITH THE LOT!

Save ten lives with a paperclip, discover how a big banana can ruin your sister's holiday, make a new friend with a garbage bin, develop a taste for sheep's spleen and chips, bounce on a vampire's bed, rescue your dad from a dog and a spider, use a toilet roll to get justice, upset the neighbours with a pickaxe, eat a pizza that makes you fearless, and imagine a world where teachers earn more money than a rock star.

*Teachers' notes available.*



*Give Peas A Chance*  
by Morris Gleitzman

A HUGE SERVING OF STORIES!

Surprise your mum with a chainsaw, be a bigger star than Tom Cruise, save the world with a plate of veggies, start your new life in a taxi, rescue your family with a tomato, send your dad into a panic with a tractor, do a good deed with a paper bag on your head pack your bags for a trip to the spleen, upset your auntie with ten kilos of chocolate, swap a bomb for three ice-creams on a train . . . and lots more.





## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<b>Digging Up Dad</b> <i>(short story collection)</i>	<b>Morris Gleitzman</b>	<b>9781760890940</b>	<b>Yrs 4-6</b>	<b>\$16.99</b>		
Snot Chocolate <i>(short story collection)</i>	Morris Gleitzman	9780143309222	4-6	\$16.99		
Pizza Cake <i>(short story collection)</i>	Morris Gleitzman	9780143305989	4-6	\$16.99		
Give Peas A Chance <i>(short story collection)</i>	Morris Gleitzman	9780143302629	4-6	\$16.99		
Help Around the House	Morris Gleitzman	9780143793236	5-7	\$16.99		
Extra Time	Morris Gleitzman	9780143307754	5-7	\$16.99		
Too Small to Fail	Morris Gleitzman	9780143306429	5-7	\$16.99		
Toad Delight	Morris Gleitzman	9780143309239	4-6	\$16.99		
Water Wings	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308928	4-6	\$16.99		
Adults Only	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308768	4-6	\$16.99		
Gift of the Gab	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308799	4-6	\$16.99		
Teacher's Pet	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308911	4-6	\$16.99		
The Other Facts of Life	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308782	4-6	\$16.99		
Second Childhood	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308775	4-6	\$16.99		
Worm Story	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308935	4-6	\$16.99		
Aristotles Nostril	Morris Gleitzman	9780143308942	4-6	\$16.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

PLEASE NOTE THAT PRICES ARE RECOMMENDED RETAIL ONLY AND MAY HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE TIME OF PRINTING. PRICES ARE GST INCLUSIVE.



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

TEL: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOUNT NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

PURCHASE ORDER NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS  
TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION  
SUPPLIER.

