

About the Guide

This Winslow Press Teacher Guide has been designed to be of use to the classroom teacher by offering enrichment activities and discussion materials to complement *The Keeper of Ugly Sounds*. These activities can help students to better understand and enjoy the story as well as assist teachers in implementing strategies and experiences that support their district's learning standards for language arts.

The Guide presents a story synopsis and outlines pre-reading activities. It also presents some concepts related to the story and includes: a brief discussion of related curriculum areas; a list of vocabulary words; class discussion questions; and independent study ideas related to *The Keeper of Ugly Sounds*. The activities are designed to cover a range of language arts skills development that meets the needs of multiple learning styles. The final part of the Guide lists additional resources (books, museums, reference materials, related Internet Web sites) for both teachers and students.

The interdisciplinary activities were developed to support the New York State Learning Standards for English Language Arts. The Standards can be downloaded from the New York State Education Department's Web site at <http://www.nysed.gov/rscs/stds/contents.html>.

If you have questions about specific standards applied to these activities, please call Winslow Press at 800-617-3947.

We hope this Teacher Guide will be a useful and positive part of your teaching experience!

Sincerely,

Diane F. Kessenich
Chief Executive Officer and Publisher

Introduction

In *The Keeper of Ugly Sounds*, author Eleanor Walsh Meyer explores family interactions, temper tantrums, and what happens when one little boy is whisked away into the snarly forest.

The main character is a noisy, demanding, and unlikable little boy who has driven his parents and all their household help to distraction with his constant tantrums. Illustrator Vlad Guzner portrays an unusual landscape that sets off the large and formal house “two inches shorter than a castle” where the unfortunate family lives. Despite its appearance of beauty and harmony, the inhabitants of this house are living in chaos. Finally, all the servants leave the boy and his parents on their own because they cannot deal with the commotion caused by the disagreeable child.

The reader is not too surprised when the boy is suddenly whisked away by a little man in a peaked green hat with an orange feather. Through a twisty snarly forest full of ugly sounds, the boy is led to a squatty brown hut. There, he is informed that he is now the Keeper of Ugly Sounds, and then left alone. The little boy tries every which way to leave the forest but to no avail. So he sets to sorting and bagging the ugly sounds and dumping them in the Lake With No Bottom.

While working as the Keeper, the boy realizes what it’s like to be constantly at the mercy of ugly sounds and begins to see himself as others see him. This becomes his springboard to change. He disavows his terrible behavior and says that he truly wants to change his ways, no more ugly sounds.

At this point, the little man reappears and tells the boy that since he has had a change of heart, he is no longer the Keeper of Ugly Sounds. After all, the Keeper has to like bad noises. In a wink, the little man whisks the boy home and then disappears without a trace. The parents, who had been terribly concerned, greet their child with a genuine expression of the love they have always had for him, ugly sounds or no. From that moment on, harmony and joy filled the hearts of all the inhabitants of the house two inches shorter than a castle.

Introduction

Critical Thinking Questions

Knowledge: Can you tell us about the little boy's behavior?
How did his parents react?

Comprehension: Why did the servants all leave the house?

Application: What advice would you give the parents to help solve their problem?

What job does the Keeper of Ugly Sounds have?

Analysis: Why did the little man think the boy was just the right person for this job?

Synthesis: Can you think of all the different ways in which the little man might find cross and grumpy children for the job of Keeper of Ugly Sounds?

Evaluation: What do you think the little boy told his parents about his adventures in the snarly forest? How do you think they felt about his story?

Related Concepts

Related Concept: Manners

As well as raising issues about such rich subjects as families and feelings, *The Keeper of Ugly Sounds* provides a basis for discussing another topic that is at once both personal and universal: good manners.

How do students think of “good manners”? As simply another set of rules imposed upon them by adults? For children, discussion of the topic is often clouded by the sense that they are being “bossed” or judged. Manners have no context; they are simply actions one has to perform—because an adult says so. Through discussion it is possible to address the why of manners and introduce students to the concept of manners as tools for negotiating different kinds of situations and as a way of demonstrating consideration for others.

Walk the group through situations in which the use of good manners is called for. These could include: two people trying to get through the same door; two people who want the same seat on a bus; sitting at a table for a meal (a fertile topic):

To Read Aloud and/or Discuss

Can you tell me what “manners” are? Why are they important?

Do you think it’s important to treat others the way you yourself would like to be treated?

How would you like to be treated?

Think about a time when something or someone made you angry. How did you react? What are some different ways of expressing anger? (shouting, fighting, crying, discussing, writing a letter, etc.) What do you do when you are angry?

Tell about a nice thing somebody has done for you today. Have you done a nice thing for someone else today? What was it?

Families

The family remains the most basic of all themes to children. It is through their families that children come to understand themselves and learn how to relate to others.

While the make-up of families may differ, there are some things on which most parents can agree. They would like their children to grow up as responsible, happy, caring human beings.

Children learn how to deal with their feelings, both positive and negative, in their day-to-day life in the family. They learn that life is pleasant for everyone including themselves when they are agreeable. When they change their attitude and behavior, they can change how others behave towards them.

Children's literature portrays families both in fact and in fantasy. Children identify with the characters and realize that others share the same problems and anxieties growing up. A story about a family projects reality into an original dimension no matter how fanciful the tale. By placing a character into a family, a fantasy story remains grounded by the ordinary details of real life. This allows children to explore complex relationships in a context that is familiar.

The young readers gain an active awareness of acceptable and unacceptable ways of handling anger and other negative feelings. They learn that it's all right to be angry. How you express your feelings is what counts. They can confront their own unpleasant reactions and deal with them in imaginative ways.

In addition to *The Keeper of Ugly Sounds*, an excellent example of confronting negative behavior is Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Many learning activities related to how people in a family behave one towards the other can be developed around families in folklore, fairy tales and fantasy. The most familiar fairy tales offer a wealth of material.

Related Concepts

Consider the behavior of Goldilocks in the story about three bears or the stepsisters in Cinderella. These stories help strengthen children's awareness of real life in a way that lets them recognize similarities in situations they have encountered and decide on what is appropriate in a particular situation. These familiar stories provide a wonderful impetus for discussion and skits.

Further Concepts to Consider

A family is made up of people who love one another and care for one another's needs.

All families need the same things: food, shelter, and clothing—but in other ways, all families are different.

All people feel emotions like anger, happiness, fear and love.

A family spends much of its money paying for shelter. People buy or rent their homes.

Everyone in a home should try to do his or her fair share of the work.

Vocabulary

companion

jauntily

shriek

drone

mutter

smudgy

squatty

haul

perch

snarly

Independent Learning

To help facilitate independent study, we have provided a starting list of ideas as well as Special Project Planning Sheets to help children get started. Some areas of interest may include the following:

Fairy-tale forests

Manners

Elves, leprechauns and other mythical “little people”

Castles

Life “once upon a time”

Life in the country

Bridges

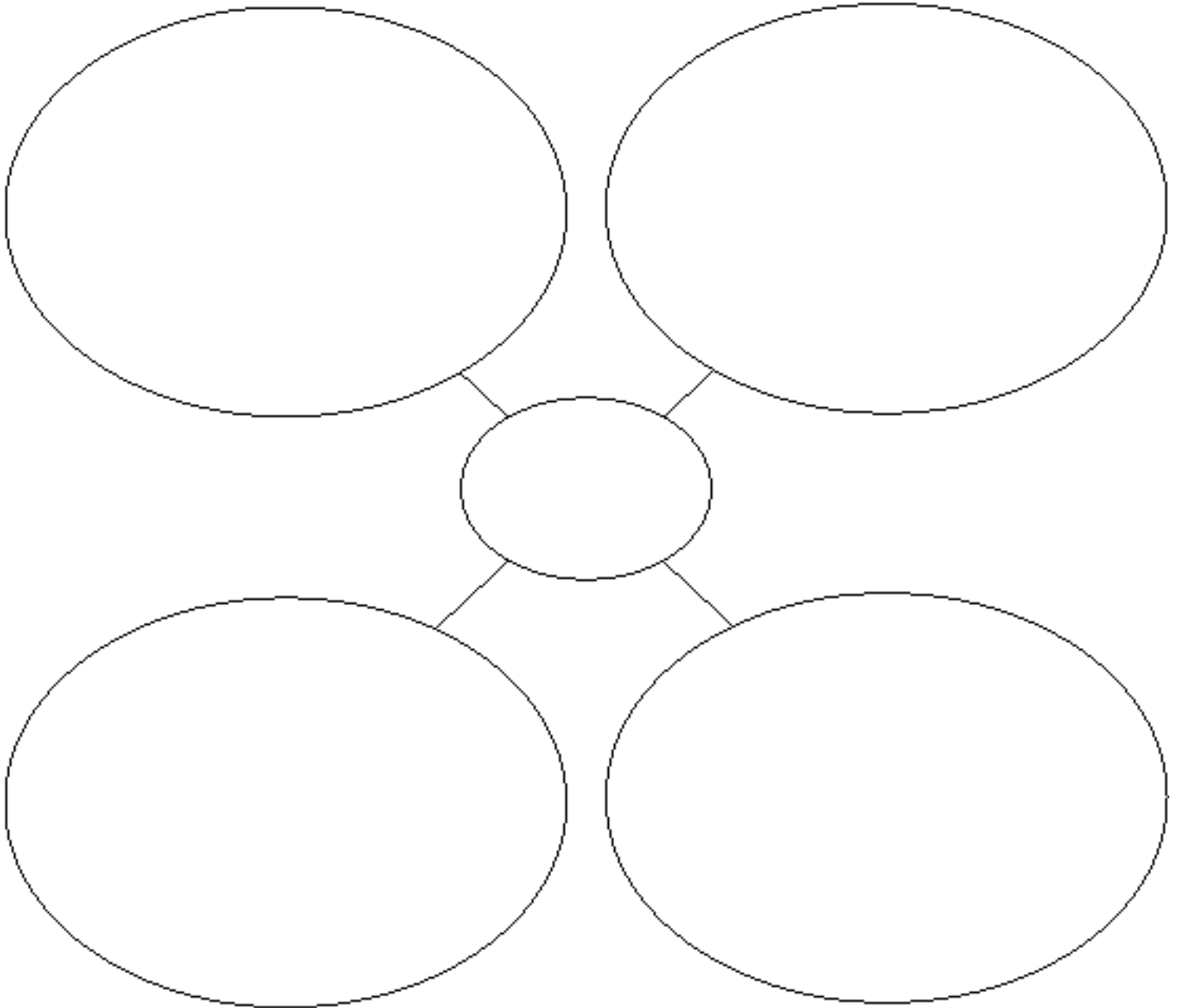
Fairy-tale themes (lost children, questioning princes, etc.)

Lakes

Name: _____

My Special Project Learning Web

Group related topics together using the Learning Web below.



Name: _____

My Special Project Planning Sheet

Some things I want to know about are:

My plan for finding facts/sources of information:

List of important facts:

Writing Prompts: Problem Scenarios

- In *The Keeper of Ugly Sounds*, when the little boy annoys the cook, the maid and the gardener, they all quit. Are there other things they could have done to help solve their problem?
- Your older brother loves to listen to music in his room. However, he turns the volume up so high that you have trouble doing your homework. How can you solve this problem?
- A new boy has moved into the neighborhood, and this is his first week at school. He sits by himself at lunch and doesn't play with anyone at recess. Can you suggest some ways in which he can make friends?

Interdisciplinary Activities

Language Arts/Listening Skills/Science: Mystery Coffee Can Game

Can you tell what's inside the can by listening to the sound it makes?

Fill empty coffee cans with various items and substances (rice, beads, water, sand, macaroni, coins, rubber ball, marbles, etc.)

Let each child:

Hit the side of each can with a spoon and listen to the sound

Shake the can up and down, describe the sounds it makes, and guess what's inside

Fill and empty the cans, feeling the texture of each item or substance

Try this with an object/substance of his or her choice and listen for the sound

Skills: Listening; Identifying; Describing

Music: Animals!

Brainstorm with the children and together, make a list of animals that live in the woods. Play instrumental music. Each child moves like an animal found in the woods (flies, jumps, scurries, etc.). When the music stops, the children choose another animal to imitate before the music starts again. Continue until each child has had the chance to play several animals.

Skills: Listening; Role Playing

Language Arts: Keeper of Many Sounds

The class has been given the job of “Keepers of Many Sounds.” Have the class brainstorm as many sounds (of all kinds) as they can, and write those sounds on the board. Then, have students group the sounds on their list into different categories: sounds made by people, sounds made by animals, sounds made by machines, etc. (Other possibilities may include: happy sounds, angry sounds, sad sounds, etc.)

Skills: Listening; Speaking; Identifying; Grouping

Language Arts/Visual Arts: Two Activities

1. Mini-Mobile

Have children talk about their favorite scenes in the book. Using pre-cut shapes that are smaller than usual, crayons, markers, string, and any other supplies you wish, have each child make a mobile representing his or her favorite scene. Use the lid of a jar to attach the string with cutouts, or tie strings to a coathanger (supervise carefully). Children can twirl their mobiles as they retell the scene to their classmates.

2. Listening: Remember When

Have you ever taken a walk in the woods? Do you remember what it was like? Close your eyes tightly, and pretend you’re on a walk in the woods. What sounds do you hear? What does the air smell like? How does the ground feel beneath your feet?

Skills: Comprehension; Retelling

Interdisciplinary Activities

Close your eyes again. Imagine that you are on a busy street. What sounds do you hear? What does the air smell like? How does the ground feel beneath your feet?

Take a large sheet of paper and divide it in half. Label one side WOODS and the other BUSY STREET. Draw what you remember.

Teacher: Encourage the children to explain the sounds made by various items in their drawings.

Skills: Recall; Description; Creating Artworks

Language Arts/Dramatic Arts: Fairy Tales Too

Woods or forests play an important part in the following stories: Hansel and Gretel, Snow White, and Little Red Riding Hood.

Using simple props (chosen by the children), choose one fairy tale and act out a scene that takes place in the woods.

Then act out the part of *Keeper* that takes place in the woods.

Skills: Analyzing; Evaluating; Role Play

Music

Children can sing and act out lyrics to this song:

“All the People in the House” (tune: “The Farmer in the Dell”)

The doctor examines the boy
The doctor examines the boy
“He’s OK, but wants his own way”
The doctor examines the boy

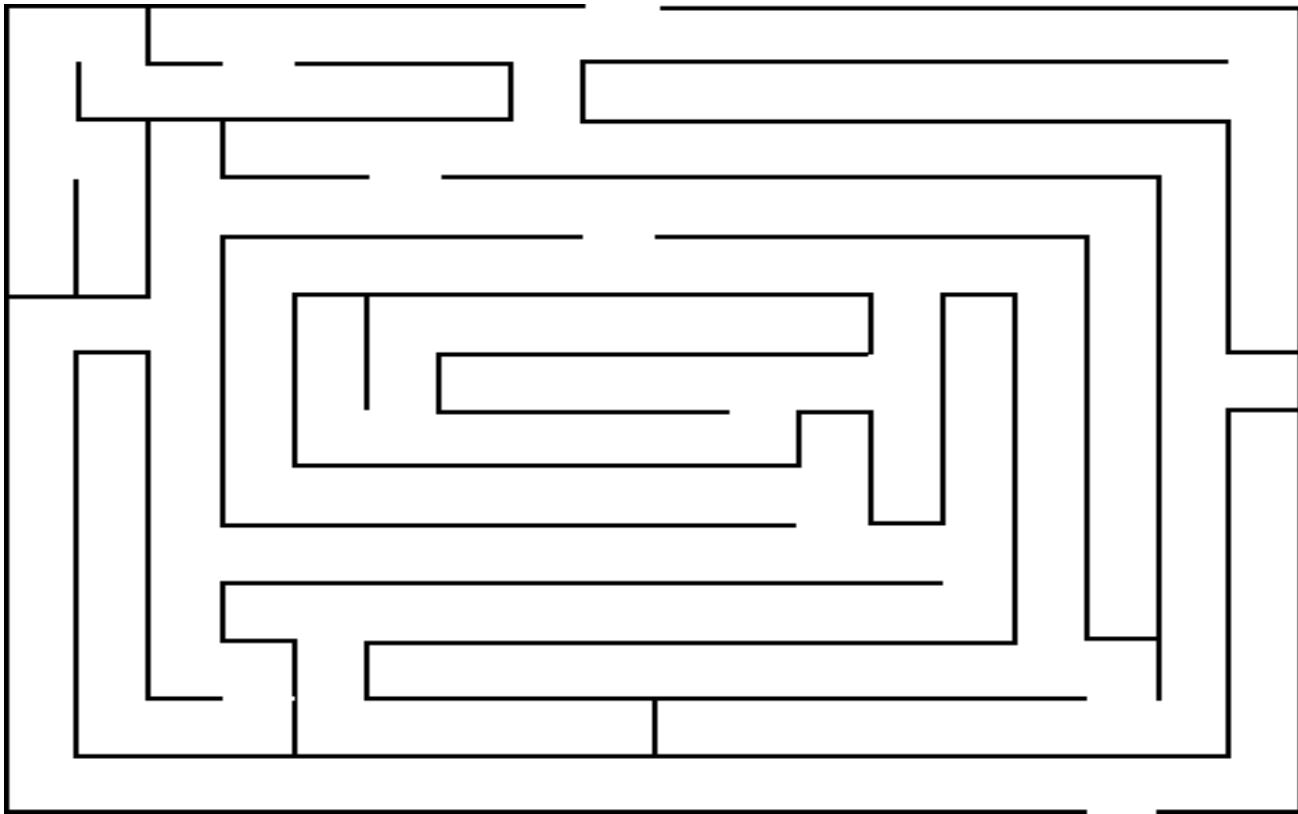
The maid cleans the house
The maid cleans the house
“The boy cries all day, I must get away!”
The maid cleans the house
The children can add verses. How about the gardener, the nurse, the boy’s parents, or the villagers?

Skills: Analyzing/Evaluating; Rhythm; Creative Language

Find Your Way Out of the Forest

Name: _____

Help the boy find his way out of the snarly forest.



Finish



Extended Learning Opportunities

Note: We strongly recommend that teachers preview materials before sharing them with students.

Books:

Aliki. **Feelings**. New York: Greenwillow Press, 1984. (Depictions of many of the feelings we all share.)

Aliki. **Manners**. New York: Greenwillow Press, 1990. (How to behave! Covers situations such as sleepovers, birthday parties, phone conversations, and discusses temper tantrums.)

Eugene, Toni. **Creatures of the Woods**. Books for Young Explorers. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1985. (The lives of animals that live in the woods. For young readers.)

Garza, Carmen Lomas. **In My Family/En mi familia**. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1996. (Bilingual text; the story of the author's Texas family.)

Riehecky, Janet. **Thank You**. Illustrated by Gwen Connelly. Manners Matter Series. Elgin, IL: The Child's World, Inc., 1989. (For kids, a cheerful approach to good manners.)

Riehecky, Janet. **Saving the Forests: A Rabbit's Story**. Illustrated by Linda Hohag. Discovery World Series. Chicago: Children's Press, 1990. (A "personalized" look at life in the woods, as well as a practical introduction to environmentalism.)

Robinson, Marc. **Cock-a-Doodle-Do!: What Does It Sound Like to You?** New York: Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1993. (Words that different languages use to describe sounds.)

Spier, Peter. **Crash! Bang! Boom!** New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1972. (Pictures of actions and objects,

accompanied by the words that represent the sounds they make.)

Wells, Rosemary. **Night Sounds, Morning Colors.** Illustrated by David McPhail. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1994. (Beautiful book about the senses and their relationship to our emotions and memories.)

Internet Resources:

Sounds of the World's Animals allows users to choose any one of 29 listed animals and see how the sounds it makes are expressed in any (or all) of 23 languages, from Afrikaans to Catalan to Hebrew to Turkish. Also offers a link to a version of the page that is intended for children.
<http://www.georgetown.edu/cball/animals/animals.html>

Animated Sign Language Dictionary. Animation helps you learn to sign letters and words.
<http://www.bconnex.net/~randys/index1.html>

The Official Gnome Web Site is a delightful look at gnomes from their history to their geographical range and daily routines.
<http://www.erols.com/michaelmyrick/index.html>

The Hands On Children's Museum. An Olympia, Washington-based site for kids age ten and under, and is currently featuring a "Fabulous Forest" theme, with recommended readings, "tree and forest jokes," etc.
<http://www.hocm.org>

National Wildlife Federation Kids Page. Bilingual (English and Spanish) articles from Ranger Rick, information about environmental issues, homework help, and more.
<http://www.nwf.org/kids>