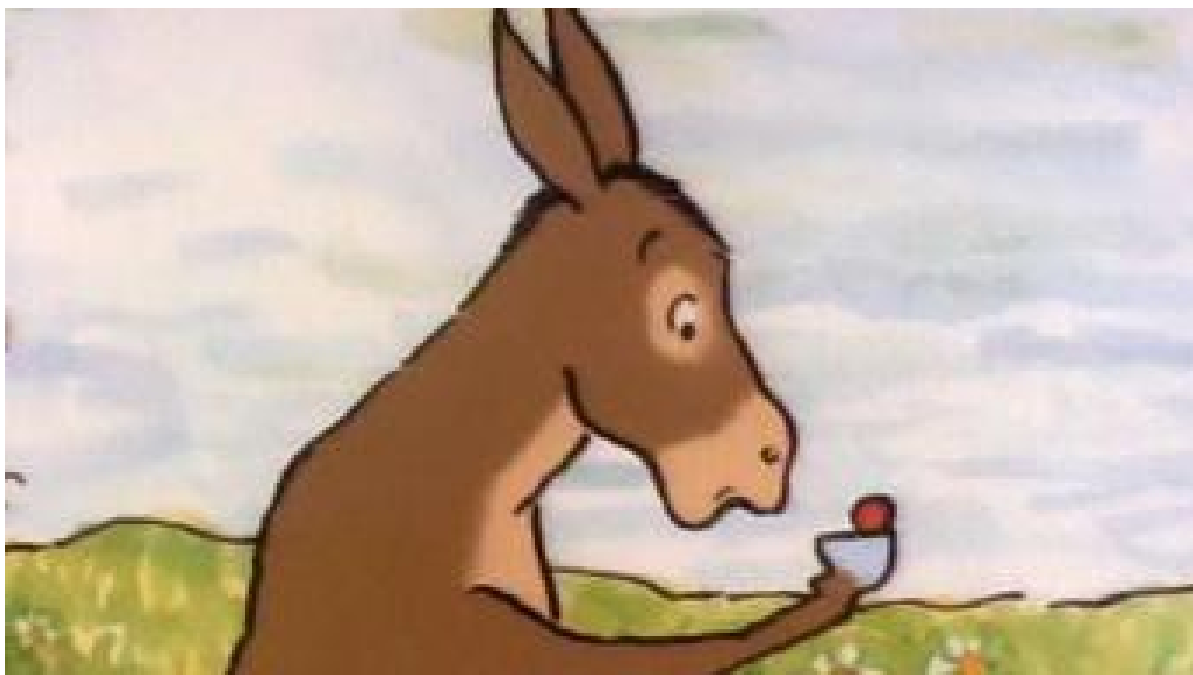


Literature guide for:

“Sylvester and the Magic Pebble” by William Steig

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Developmental rationale

These lessons are designed for first or second graders. This book is appropriate for this age group because it will captivate their imaginations and they will be challenged by some of the vocabulary words. According to Chip Wood, sevens in particular love to learn and explore new vocabulary words. Some potentially unfamiliar vocabulary words include: ceased, vanished, gratified, perplexed, bewildered, muttered, frantic, and inquiry. Chip Wood also says that seven year olds like to collect and sort things. Sylvester is a collector of rocks. Additionally, Wood believes that children in both of these age groups love to ask questions. This book and my lessons around it invite children to ask questions. For sixes, family is everything but for sevens family is becoming slightly less important. For sevens, a sense of independence and agency is important. Both of these themes are explored in Sylvester thereby making it a good fit for either age group. “Sylvester and the Magic Pebble” is a beautifully illustrated book and these illustrations will be sure to catch the attention of a six or seven year old.

Summary

“Sylvester and the Magic Pebble” is a story about being careful what you wish for. Sylvester the donkey loves to collect rocks and one day he finds a magic pebble that can make all his wishes come true. When a lion appears and scares him Sylvester wishes he is a stone. The pebble falls to the ground and he is powerless to turn himself back into a donkey because he needs to be holding the magic pebble. In town, everyone helps Sylvester’s parents look for him but they cannot find him. Months pass and Sylvester’s parents decide to go on a picnic to try to cheer up. They wind up picnicking on the rock that is Sylvester, finding the magic pebble, and turning Sylvester back into a donkey. After a happy family reunion the magic pebble gets locked up in a safe. This is a story with many emotional ups and downs and the illustrations beautifully capture these emotions.

Initiating Activity

Materials:

“Sylvester and the Magic Pebble” by William Steig

Gather the children together in the meeting area or where books are normally read. Ask if anyone has ever read or heard of the book then lead a short discussion about collections. Explain that Sylvester collects rocks and ask if anyone has a rock collection. Ask for other items that people collect. This will help children establish a relationship and connection with/to Sylvester. For more initiating activities see the first part of the mini-lesson.

Mini-lesson- Making Predictions

Adapted from Cara Hedger and Melissa Hinton’s mini-lesson found at [misshinton.Weebly.com](http://misshinton.weebly.com)

Materials:

“Sylvester and the Magic Pebble” by William Steig

Chart paper
Marker

Prior to reading, ask students if they know what it means to make a prediction. If students do not know, supply them with a clear definition. For example say, “A prediction means making a thoughtful guess about what is going to happen next in the story using clues from the words and pictures.”

Modeling/Demonstrating:

Say to students: “Sylvester and the Magic Pebble”- When I read this title I think about the word magic. I wonder, what makes the pebble magic? I know that magic often brings people good luck so maybe the magic pebble will make Sylvester lucky. I’m going to write my prediction down and as we read we will learn if my prediction is correct. Does anyone else have a prediction of what might happen? What makes you think that?

Prediction	Why?
I predict that the pebble is magic because it will bring Sylvester good luck.	Because magic and luck are often connected

Guided Practice:

(Read the story until after Sylvester is frightened by the lion.) Say to students: We know that the magic in the pebble is that it makes wishes come true. It says here, “If he hadn’t been so frightened, he could have made the lion disappear, or he could have wished himself safe at home with his father and mother.” So, we know he did NOT wish for the lion disappear or that he was safe at home. What do you predict Sylvester wished? Why do you predict that? When you have an idea put your finger on your nose. (Wait for at least 4 children to demonstrate that they have an idea.) Have a few students share their predictions and why they think that. Write their predictions on the chart.

Prediction	Why?

Okay, let’s read on and see what Sylvester wished for when the lion came. Are any of our predictions correct? (Reread them if you think students need to hear them again). If none of the predictions are correct ask students what did happen and write that down on the chart.

Checking for Understanding (assessment):

Listen to students share their predictions. Are they using context clues to make accurate predictions? Do they seem ready to do it on their own?

Releasing students:

Say to students: Today we learned how to predict what will happen in a story using clues from the text and pictures. Now when you read on your own you will be able to make predictions as you read and it will make books easier to understand. Happy reading!

Critical thinking questions

The following questions are to be answered after reading the book. Questions 3 and 4 are well suited to being answered through discussion. These discussions can happen as a whole class or small group (if an adult is able to help lead the discussion). Questions 1, 2, and 5 are meant to be answered by asking children to draw images for them. Set up a worksheet with space for writing and drawing. See appendix for sample.

1. What would you have wished for if you had seen the lion?
2. What would you wish for if you had a magic pebble?
3. How do you think Sylvester felt when he was a rock? Why?
4. Why do you think Sylvester's parents locked the magic pebble in a safe?
5. What would you have done with the magic pebble?

Extension activities

Materials:

Paper

Art supplies

Worksheet (see appendix)

Procedure:

1. Reread the end where it says, "You can imagine the scene that followed-- the embraces, the kisses, the questions, the answers, the loving looks, and the fond exclamations."

2. Ask children to write 3 questions Sylvester's parents would ask him and what his answers would be.

3. Also, have them draw a picture of what they think the reunion would look like. Prior to asking them to draw, engage in a conversation about what a reunion is and some words that would describe how Sylvester and his parents would feel at the reunion. This will ensure that children know what they are supposed to be drawing about and will help guide them in their drawing.

Assessment:

Were student's questions and answers logical and relevant to the story? Did they use evidence from the text in their answers? In their drawings do students show a clear understanding of what a reunion is and the emotions that accompany it? This is not about the quality of artwork but the message it conveys. For example, are characters smiling in drawings?

Common Core Standards Addressed

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1

Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3

Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Student Worksheet

Three Questions

Question 1.

Answer:

Question 2.

Answer:

Question 3.

Answer:

Student Worksheet

If I Saw A Lion

Draw a picture of what you would wish for:

If I saw the lion I would wish for _____
