

DEAR DR. SILLYBEAR Teaching Guide



INTRODUCTION:

Dear Dr. Sillybear is a picture book with a clever story, challenging wordplay, and funny pictures.

BACKGROUND: Dian Curtis Regan is the author of over 50 books for young readers. As a former Denver school teacher, Ms. Regan noticed how much students who were learning how to read enjoyed word play, puns, and humorous stories. All these came together in a story about a doctor who misunderstands his patients, yet always comes up with the perfect cure.

SUMMARY:

Dr. Sillybear and Nurse Rabbit have lots of patience with their patients. First, there's Horace, the hoarse horse, and Hoot, the baby owl who says "WHAT" instead of "WHOO."

Then there's Mole who has trouble seeing in the dark, and Fox who wants Dr. Sillybear to encourage Lamb to stray from the flock. But the good doctor won't be outfoxed. He is never without advice--or is Nurse Rabbit the one with all the answers?

SKILLS: READING & LANGUAGE:

(1) Discuss homophones, especially those from the story, like horse and hoarse. Have students write original rhymes for homophones. Samples: read/red, sight/site, pray/prey.

(2) Read Andrew and Dr. Sillybear's conversation out loud. How does Andrew

misinterpret everything Dr. Sillybear says?

(3) Vocabulary: define words students may not be familiar with such as "extinct, gallop, peered, hustled, advice, flicked, crumpled, party-poopers."

Use synonyms for these words and read the sentence they appear in. Why did the author choose these words instead of others?

(4) Wh-word questions: Talk about wh-words: who, what, when, where, and why. "Who" questions are answered by people; "why" questions are reasons; etc. Have students formulate Wh questions related to the story.

WRITING ACTIVITIES:

Letter writing skills: Have half of the class write a letter to Dr. Sillybear asking for advice from an animal's point of view. Have the other half of the class answer the letter from either Dr. Sillybear's point of view or Nurse Rabbit's.

Creative writing: Have students write a story or poem about:

- *How Horace became hoarse
- *How Hoot learned to whoo
- *How Andrew made friends at the fishpond

Nonfiction writing: Compose an article that might appear in the Forest Daily Newspaper. Ideas:

- *Today's weather
- *Sports in Piney Meadow
- *Horoscopes
- *Cartoons
- *Recipes

MATH:

Estimate the cost of Andrew's bill and total it. Assign different members of the class to find the actual cost of these items today. Discuss comparison shopping. Get the actual cost from different types of stores.

Expansion: research the cost of items 5 or 10 years ago. At this website: <http://www.westegg.com/inflation>, students can find out what a given amount of money was worth in any year.

Example: In 1950, \$100 was worth \$668.97 in today's dollars. However, \$100 in 1950 would only be worth \$14.95 today.

SCIENCE/HEALTH:

(1) Discuss hibernation (bears). Discuss predators and prey (fox and lamb).

- (2) Study moles and their ability to live underground.
- (3) Study fireflies and relate their light to electricity.
- (4) What causes a "hoarse" voice? What might have caused Horace's hoarseness?
- (5) Invite the school nurse to visit the classroom and talk about his/her job, and how a hoarse voice would be treated.

SOCIAL STUDIES:

- (1) Discuss habitats of different animals in the story.
- (2) Discuss the foliage and landforms that might make up Piney Meadow. Don't forget the cave and the fishpond.

ORAL & LISTENING SKILLS:

- (1) Do oral presentations of homophone rhymes.
- (2) Listen to a recording of the famous Abbott and Costello routine "Who's on First?" at: <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/humor4.shtml>

Discuss Abbott and Costello's confusion. Why is their exchange funny?

CRITICAL THINKING:

- (1) Is Forest Daily a good name for Dr. Sillybear's newspaper? Why or why not? What other names could Piney Meadow's newspaper have been called?

Bring a newspaper from home. How would the Forest Daily differ from your hometown news?

- (2) Why is Cranky Bear cranky? Where are his friends? What is the surprise that Cranky Bear finds? What are his friends doing?
- (3) Name other animals that are extinct. Are animals the only specie that can become extinct? What about plants? Or such things as record players, Edsels, viewfinders? What made them "extinct"? Ask your grandparents for a list of "extinct" items they remember.
- (4) Nurse Rabbit had difficulty trying to take Andrew's height and weight. Why? How would you have done it?

(5) Why would a fox care about what a lamb wanted to do? Why didn't Nurse Rabbit take credit for her answer to Fox?

(6) What would a real doctor's chart include? (Have one for the class to study.)

GUIDANCE:

(1) What is an advice column? Discuss good and bad advice. Ask students what kind of advice they've received from others.

(2) What about Nurse Rabbit's decision to give Dr. Sillybear credit for her advice? Was it a good idea or not?

ART:

(1) Illustrate the creative homophone sentences.

(2) Construct a 3D Piney Meadow.

(3) Create a map of the area for travelers.

(4) Draw Dr. Sillybear's "best picture" and invent the name of a famous artist who might have painted it.

(5) Study several real artists, either local or historical. Have students choose each artists' "best picture." If answers vary, discuss why. (eg: what is the difference between "best" and "favorite?")

(6) Draw other residents who might live in Piney Meadow. (Eg: Dottie Deer, Grandpa Skunk, Reverend Rattlesnake, etc.)

BULLETIN BOARD IDEAS:

(1) Display students' letters and answers, illustrated homophone rhymes, or their best pictures.

(2) Create a calendar, showing what Piney Meadow looks like in every month of the year.

COMPREHENSIVE SKILLS:

(1) "Play with someone your own size" is a common saying. What other sayings have you heard? Discuss their meaning.

(2) Assign groups to act out parts of the story. This book lends itself well to drama activities:

- * Act One: Horace and the doctor
- * Act Two: Mrs. Owl and Hoot
- * Act Three: Dr. Sillybear and Nurse Rabbit answer letters
- * Act Four: Andrew's visit

STUDY SKILLS:

Wh-word worksheets and Homophone worksheets are available commercially from teacher resource stores.

EXTRA CREDIT:

A walrus is hidden in many of the author's books. Find the walrus in Dear Dr. Sillybear. Could a walrus actually live in Piney Meadow? Why or why not?

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to Tonya Pember for creating this guide. Ms. Pember has been a Speech/Language Pathologist for twenty years and tutors high risk students in reading. She is an avid children's literature fan who collects ABC books. Arthur, Madeline, Clifford, Curious George, and Snoopy share her desk space.