
Literature Selection: *Jessica* by Kevin Henkes

Summary

Ruthie gives up an imaginary companion named Jessica when she finds a real friend named Jessica in her kindergarten class.

Suggested Activities

- Making an Imaginary Friend
- Individual Story Theater
- Dictating Stories
- Re-Telling the Story

Making an Imaginary Friend

On paper plates have students create the face of an imaginary friend using construction paper, beads, buttons, pipe cleaners and various other arts and craft supplies that are on hand. Cotton balls or yarn can be used to add hair. Students can glue Popsicle sticks to the backs of the plate to form a handle so that the faces can be used as puppets.

Individual Story Theater

Read *Jessica* again and have each student act out the events of the story as you read. Because most of the story is based on only one “real” character, children can pretend to be talking to an imaginary friend just as Ruthie does. Let half of the kids sit down and watch the rest of the students perform and then let the groups switch. Allow all students a chance to perform and to observe. Discuss the body movements and actions that students used to help show what was going on in the story as it was read aloud.

Dictating Stories

If the students are unable to write, have them dictate stories to you about adventures they would like to have (or have had) with an imaginary friend. This activity can be done as a class or in small groups if there are other adults or older students to help record the dictation. Read the dictation back to the students and have them identify certain letters, words or sounds in the letters that make up the dictation. Encourage children to join in as you read and re-read the dictation. Students can draw illustrations to complement the dictations.

Re-Telling the Story

Read and discuss the story. Have the students re-tell the story of *Jessica* and record it on tape. Encourage students to use instruments, sound effects and voice inflection in their re-telling. Model a re-telling of another book so students have an example to follow. Consider pairing young students up with students from an older grade to make this assignment more interesting. Also, the younger students may need some help from an older student or adult with the tape recorder and sound effects. Have children work in pairs or small groups. Play the recorded re-tellings for all to enjoy.