
Literature Selection: *Mary Ann* by Betsy James (Moving Away)

Summary

Mary Ann is Amy's best friend. After Mary Ann moves away Amy finds a praying mantis and names it after Mary Ann to help ease her loneliness. The insect becomes Amy's new friend until the mantis dies after she lays her eggs. Amy and her family return home from a visit to the real Mary Ann's house to discover that all of the eggs have hatched and Amy has hundreds of new friends. Amy will never be lonely again!

Suggested Activities

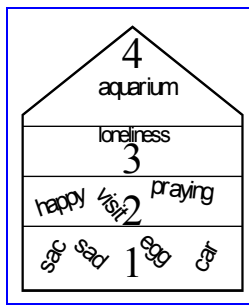
- Predictions
- Relating Story to Personal Experiences
- House of Syllables
- I am . . . Re-telling from another point of view
- Look for a Clue

Predictions

Help students develop prediction, comprehension and decision making skills. Start by simply reading the title of the book. Ask student to make a prediction or a guess about what the story might be about. Record their predictions on the board. Next, read some of the text, stopping at a predetermined point. When everyone has read to the stopping point, have them make another prediction. What will the character(s) do? What can't the character(s) do at this point? Record the second prediction and cross off any of the first predictions that are no longer possible. Make sure the class discusses why the predictions are no longer possible. Ask the students to listen or watch for the plot clues that lead them to suspect that the story might turn out a particular way. Finish reading the story and discuss their sequence of predictions. Was anyone really close? If so, let the student share what things in the story helped them make effective predictions.

Relating Story to Personal Experiences

Read *Mary Ann*. Ask students to think of story incidents similar to events in their own lives and discuss them with the class. Have they ever had a friend move away? How did they feel? Why? What did they do to make themselves feel better? Did they ever see the friend who moved away again? Have students put their thoughts onto paper by having them write or draw ways that they and the story character(s) are similar.

House of Syllables¹

Draw a house and divide the house up into floors. The number of floors required depends on the words in the text (how many syllables they have) and the students' ability to identify word syllables. Number the floors starting with one. The floor number signifies how many syllables a word must contain before it can be written down on that floor. Encourage students to find words from the text of *Mary Ann* that can be placed in the House of Syllables. Also, encourage students to add their own words that may describe

¹ Taken from *Learning Magazine's Superbook of teacher tips*. Page 115.

a situation in the story or how Amy may have felt at a given time. Add additional floors to the syllable house to challenge students.

I am . . . Re-telling from another point of view

Have the students choose one of the characters from the story: Mary Ann (the girl or the mantis), Amy, or either of Amy's parents. Students re-tell the story of *Mary Ann* from their characters point of view, adding their own little details to enhance the re-telling of the story. The audience must listen closely to the re-telling and decide which character the student is representing. Also, the audience must identify any details that the re-teller has added to the story to make it different than the book. Discuss the different points of view and the different emotions that each character felt throughout the story (i.e. How did Amy's mother feel when she discovered the eggs had hatched? How did Amy feel when she discovered the eggs had hatched? Why might the two characters feel differently about the same event? How did Amy feel when Mary Ann moved? How might have Mary Ann felt?)

Look for a Clue

Amy comes home to find that the screen had been left off the aquarium full of eggs and the house is full of insects. We do not really know for sure who left the screen off the aquarium so it is time for students to search the text and illustrations for clues. Students collect evidence from the text and the illustrations to prove who is guilty.

Other Literature Suggestions

The following literature selections deal with the issue of losing a friend in a more serious manner than the primary literature selection.

***Star of Fear, Star of Hope* by Jo Hoestlandt**

Nine-year-old Helen loses her Jewish friend Lydia when the Nazis take her. The last thing Helen said to Lydia was "You're not my friend anymore!" Many years later Helen is still hoping that Lydia survived the war and that she knows how much Helen loved her.

***The Bracelet* by Yoshiko Uchida**

A Japanese-American girl remembers the friend she had to leave behind when she had to go live in an internment camp during World War II.

***I had a friend named Peter: Talking to children about the death of a friend* by Janice Cohn**

This is a story about a child that loses her friend, Peter. The story touches on how she finds answers to some of her questions about death.