

Blueberries for Sal

by Robert McCloskey

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Jennifer Lee Richards

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Synopsis

Both Little Sal and Little Bear come to Blueberry Hill with their mothers on an August day. Little Sal is to help her mother pick blueberries so they may be canned and eaten in the winter. Little Bear is to eat up as many blueberries as he can hold so that he has enough food stored for hibernating in the winter. So how do the two families get mixed up?

The children get lost and while they hunt for their mothers they confuse other animal noises for those of their parent's. The two children end up following behind the wrong mothers and cause quite a stir when the mistake is discovered.

Happily the correct parent and child are reunited and the two families go slowly home down opposite sides of Blueberry Hill.

Biographical Sketch

Robert (John) McCloskey was born on September 15, 1914 in Hamilton, Ohio. He is married to Margaret Durand, a children's librarian, whose mother is the Newbery Award winning author, Ruth Sawyer. McCloskey has two daughters, Sally and Jane. He lives in Scott Islands Harborside, Maine.

McCloskey took piano lessons as a child, then played the harmonica, the drums and the oboe. As a teenager he became interested in mechanical and electrical things and enjoyed being an inventor. In high school he made drawings for the school paper and the yearbook.

McCloskey attended Vesper George Art School using a scholarship he earned by winning the "Scholastic Magazine's" Annual Art Award Contest in which he entered a piece of woodcutting. He later attended the National Academy of Design.

McCloskey is an author and illustrator of children's books, a professional artist and designer, a teacher of fine arts, and a college professor. McCloskey has exhibited his varied art pieces in many one-man shows. He has also done mural painting and commercial art work. He has been a technical director in a theater department and has designed theater and nightclub sets. He became a technical sergeant of visual aids during the three years he served in the U.S. Army. McCloskey also enjoys gardening, sailing, fishing, and picnicking.

McCloskey's first book, *Lentil*, is about a boy who plays the harmonica. McCloskey said he wrote the book in order to have something to illustrate.

Critic's Corner

McCloskey uses many of his life experiences to create his books. He often writes about the experiences his family has had while living on an island. His own daughters' names are used in his stories as seen in the book *Blueberries for Sal*. Some of McCloskey's books have been adapted into films, filmstrips, and records.

McCloskey earned the President's Award at the National Academy of Design. He received the Caldecott Medal for *Make Way for Ducklings* in 1942 and for *Time of Wonder* in 1958. McCloskey is the first author to receive two Caldecott medals.

McCloskey feels that because "our lives are influenced by pictures, every child, along with learning to read and write, should be taught to draw and design." He feels "it is important for everyone really to see and evaluate pictures and really see and evaluate his surroundings."

Objectives

1. To understand picking berries and canning
2. To discuss getting lost
3. To analyze the fear felt between people and animals

Comprehension Study

1. Examine the picture on the first two pages. Discuss with the students what is being made. Research about canning to find out what Little Sal is playing with. Ask how many students' families can goods. Can some fruits or vegetables if possible or taste some.
2. Ask the students to search the pages for clues as to what time of year it is. (Note calendar displaying the month of August.) Ask them what season it is.
3. Have students vote as to whether Sal is a boy or a girl. Have the students guess what the nickname Sal stands for.
4. Research about blueberries. How are they grown? Where do they grow best? What are some uses of blueberries? Eat some fresh, canned or frozen blueberries. Or taste all three types and compare them. Which do the students like best?
5. Discuss McCloskey's method of capitalizing letters of words such as "Tremendous Mouthful" and "My Goodness." Why do the students think he does this? Instruct students on the proper enunciation of italicized or capitalized words.

6. Discuss what the closing statement, "a whole pail of blueberries and three more besides" means.
7. Have the students decide whether Little Bear's mother spoke English when she was speaking to Little Bear and Little Sal. Do the students think Little Sal understood the mother bear but did not answer her?

Student Activities

1. Read the story aloud or with the students.
2. Research about Robert McCloskey and read some of his other books.
3. Research about Caldecott Medals. Find out how many Caldecotts McCloskey has won.
4. Note the copyright of the book. Have students research about the 1940 time period. Have them notice the stove and the store-bought products in the kitchen. How are the students' kitchens at home different from this one?
5. Hang a bulletin board that reads "Don't be Blue - Read *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey." Then display any related illustrations or graph information below the heading.
6. Go blueberry picking if possible. Have a timed contest to see which student can pick the most berries in a minute. Post the results back at school.
7. Go on a hike up a hill.
8. Have students vote for their favorite fruit. Graph the results and eat some of the winner.
9. Fill a small metal pail with fresh blueberries. Have students estimate how many blueberries are in the pail. To find out the answer have students each take a handful from the pail, like Little Sal did, and count these to get a total. Also see who was able to take the largest handful.
10. Using the now-empty pail drop three blueberries into it. Ask the students whether they make a "kuplink, kuplank, kuplunk" sound as McCloskey describes. If not, what do they sound like to the students?
11. Research about bears. Have students find out what type of bear Little Bear and his mother are.
12. Read other books with bear characters in them.
13. Research about hibernation. What other animals hibernate?
14. Have students find out what special precautions other animals take as well as storing up food.
15. Play a guessing game similar to the experience Little Sal and Little Bear had when they mistook sounds of other animals for those of their mothers. Have students bring in objects that make noise. As each student shares their object with the class, have the other students close their eyes and then try to guess what object made the noise.

EX: Crumple up paper, use a duck call, pop a paper bag.

16. Have students add to the story by inventing other sounds that Little Sal or Little Bear could hear and mistake for their mothers. Illustrate the story with the new ideas included and then reread the story aloud as a class. Possibly make the new version an enlarged book or a "Big Book."
17. Research about crows and partridges.
18. Play follow the leader.
19. Have students look at a variety of maps. Have them locate names of places, landforms and bodies of water that appear to have been derived because of a certain feature. Explain to the students that Blueberry Hill was probably named so because blueberries grow on it. Have students research to see how these types of names that they find on maps originated.
20. Have students create their own maps of make-believe landforms, bodies of water and places that have names that were so named because of their features. Have students make travel brochures or encyclopedia article entries to explain how the names were derived.
21. Study about how valleys, mountains, and hills are formed and their unique features.
22. Note that once Little Sal ate one blueberry she could not stop eating them. Have students reveal what foods they can not stop eating. Have students bring in samples of their favorites or vote on one class favorite and eat it.
23. Have students experiment with pen and ink drawings.
24. Have students notice how McCloskey has presented a photographic type illustration of Little Sal and her mother in the first picture of the story. See if students can produce a realistic portrait of a friend.
25. Little Sal and Little Bear become too tired to follow their mothers and therefore become lost. Have the students share their own experiences of getting lost.
26. Have students make a list of the sounds certain animals are said to make.

EX: a lion roars, a horse neighs, a dog barks and growls.

Bibliography

- ed. Commire, Anne. *Something About the Author: Facts and Pictures About Authors and Illustrators of Books for Young People*, Vol. 39, 1985.

Vocabulary Activity

Write down the sentences from the story that have the following words in them. Cut the sentences into strips and have students select a sentence randomly from a hat. Have the student act out the action described in the sentence and have the rest of the class search the book to find the specific sentence or just the movement word acted out.

hustling	tramped	hunted	walking	padded
hurried	licking	followed	struggled	backed away
started	fly away	picking	choking	turned around
peeking	swallowing			

Vocabulary Test

Place the correct words listed below into the sentences they belong.

pail	clump	storing	blueberries
earth	noise	munching	tasted

1. Little Sal brought along her small tin _____ .
2. Little Bear heard a _____ from over a stump and thought, "That is my mother walking along."
3. Little Sal sat down in the middle of a large _____ of bushes and ate blueberries.
4. Little Bear's mother was tramping along thinking about _____ up food for the winter.
5. Little Bear _____ another Tremendous Mouthful of blueberries.

Comprehension Test

Answer the following questions by stating if the sentences are true or false. If the sentence is true write a **T** in the blank before the sentence. If the sentence is false write an **F** in the blank. If the answer is false, then use the line below that statement to explain why it is false.

___ 1. Little Sal and her mother picked blueberries to eat during the spring.

___ 2. Little Bear and his mother ate blueberries to store up food for the long, cold winter.

___ 3. The noise that Little Bear heard from over a stump, and thought was his mother, was really a mother partridge and her children.

___ 4. Little Bear made hustling, munching, and swallowing noises.

___ 5. The noise that Little Sal heard coming from around a rock was her mother.

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Test

1. pail 2. noise 3. clump 4. storing 5. tasted

Comprehension Test

1. F Little Sal and her mother picked blueberries in order to eat them in the winter.
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. F Little Sal mistook the noise that a mother crow and her children made for her own mother.



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