

# Caps for Sale

by Esphyr Slobodkina

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Elanna Grover

A Perma-Bound Production

**Note to the Teacher:** This guide is not intended to be followed exactly. If you did all of the following activities, both you and your students would be tired of working with this book long before you finished. Instead you are meant to pick and choose among the suggested activities based on the needs and interests of your particular group. You are encouraged to make adaptations, or to supplement the guide with activities of your own creation. Even though this book has no page numbers, this guide will refer to certain pages by number. Therefore, you may find it convenient to number the pages in your copy of the book, starting with the page showing the peddler standing by the window box of tulips with the church in the background as page 1.

## Synopsis

A peddler who sells caps carries his wares on his head. One morning after failing to sell any caps, he walks out into the country and leans back against a tree to take a nap. When he awakes he finds that his hats have disappeared. After looking all around, he discovers a group of monkeys up in the tree, and each monkey is wearing one of his caps. The peddler shakes his fists and stomps his feet and demands that the monkeys return his caps. They just shake their fists and stomp their feet back at him. When he finally throws his own checked cap on the ground in disgust, the monkeys all follow suit, and he picks up his caps and walks back to town.

## Objectives

1. Students will have opportunities to recall details, make interpretations, read critically, and respond creatively to the book
2. Students will expand their vocabulary through the use of context clues, class discussion, and word games and activities
3. Students will learn how quotation marks are used
4. Students will learn to count money and make change

## Biographical Sketch

Esphyr Slobodkina (pronounced ess-FEER slow-BOD-keen-ah) was born in the Siberian town of Cheliabinsk at the foot of the Ural mountains in 1909. Her family lived right next to the Trans-Siberian railway where her father was the oil yard manager. Through her father's job she met a wide variety of people from Russian peasants to Chinese peddlers. A steady stream of refugees stayed at their house after the Russian civil war began, and finally,

the Slobodkina family also left Russia and came to the United States.

Living in New York City during the Depression, she painted trays and wastepaper baskets, and worked as a dress designer and a designer and foreman at an experimental textile printing shop. During this time she became acquainted with Margaret Wise Brown who later asked her to illustrate her book, *The Little Fireman*. Margaret Wise Brown encouraged Esphyr to write her own books, and in 1940 she wrote *Caps for Sale*. In 1960, rather late in her life, she married William Lester Urquhart.

Esphyr Slobodkina also enjoys sculpting, interior design and decorating, and designing clothes. She has paintings hanging in several art museums and important collections.

## Introductory Activities

1. Discuss the expression "Monkey see, monkey do." Explain how monkeys often imitate the behavior of others.
2. Discuss peddlers and what they do. How are peddlers different from other people who sell things? Try to think of some modern day peddlers. Have you read or heard any other stories that have a peddler for a character?

## Discussion Questions

### During the Reading:

1. (after p.12) Do you notice anything different about the peddler on this page?
2. (after p.16) What do you think has happened to the peddler's caps?
3. (after p.18) What do you think the peddler saw up in the tree?
4. (after p.20) How can the peddler get his hats back from the monkeys? What supplies will he need?
5. (after p.29) The monkeys aren't listening to the peddler. Think about what the monkeys *are* doing each time the peddler asks them to give back his caps. Does this give you any new ideas to help the peddler get his caps back from the monkeys?
6. (after p.31) What do you think will happen next?

### After the Reading:

1. What would you have done differently if you had been the peddler?
  2. Where do you think the peddler got his caps?
  3. The peddler did not sell any caps, and he has no money to buy food. How do you think the peddler could get something to eat?
  4. How do you think the peddler felt as he walked out of town? What more could he have done to sell his caps?
  5. Perhaps the peddler could sell some caps if he thinks of some new and unusual uses for them. Read *Who Stole the Farmer's Hat* by Joan L. Nodset and see how many other uses you can think of for the peddler's caps.
  6. Another way that the peddler might sell some caps is to invent a new kind of hat that would be so wonderful that everyone would want one. Help the peddler by inventing a new and improved hat.
  7. How many different reasons can you think of to explain why the monkeys took the peddler's caps?
  8. If the monkeys had kept the hats, what do you think they might have done with them?
  9. Does the peddler realize why the monkeys threw the caps on the ground? Explain it to him.
  10. Suppose the peddler sold all of his caps except for his own checked cap. How much money would he make? (count his caps and multiply by 50¢)
3. Practice some math skills by playing peddler. Several students can set up peddlers' carts with wares for sale. These students need to mark prices on all their wares. Other students can use play money to buy some of the wares from the peddlers' carts. The peddlers can keep track of how much money they have made and practice making change. The shoppers may want to do some comparison shopping among the various peddlers to make sure they get the most for their money.
  4. To see how it feels to be a peddler with caps on your head, try walking with a book on your head. When you can do that without dropping the book, try it with two or three or even four books stacked on your head.
  5. List all the different kinds of hats you can think of (ie. chef's hat, fireman's hat, crown, ski mask, football helmet, etc.).
  6. Rewrite the story of *Caps for Sale* with a different animal stealing the peddler's caps. Or write a story telling about the mischief that the monkeys in *Caps for Sale* did to another person.
  7. Make report cards for the peddler and the monkeys. Think of some appropriate categories for them to be graded on such as "keeps his temper," "follows directions," etc. Write some comments from the teacher.

### Activities

1. Have your students dramatize this story. Depending on the size of your class you will need about 20-25 felt squares in gray, brown, blue, and red, and one white felt square. Cut the corners off of the felt squares so that they are shaped like an oval. Use a permanent black marker to make checks on the white square. These felt squares make good caps because they stick together when stacked and will not fall off too easily when worn by the student who portrays the peddler. You may want to make headbands with monkey ears on them and monkey tails out of yarn or paper for the rest of the students. One student will act as a narrator and another as the peddler. The rest of the class will be monkeys. The narrator then rereads the story with the peddler and the monkeys chiming in with their lines. (This is a good time to teach quotation marks to help the peddler and monkeys identify their parts. You may want to reproduce the text on an overhead transparency and circle the quotation marks around the peddler's speeches with a red marker and around the monkeys' speeches with a green marker.)
2. When the peddler couldn't find his caps, he looked to the right of him and to the left of him. Practice following directions involving right and left by playing "The Peddler Says" just as you would play "Simon Says." Try to include many directions that involve distinguishing between right and left (ie. Pull on your left ear. Raise your right hand. Hop on your left foot, etc.).

### Bibliography of Other Books

#### Books about Hats:

*The Witch's Hat* by Tony Johnson

*Tan Tan's Hat* by Kazuo Iwamura

*Who Took the Farmer's Hat* by Joan L. Nodset

*The Cap That Mother Made* adapted and illustrated by Christine Westerberg

*Martin's Hats* by Joan Blos

#### Books about Peddlers:

*One Fine Day* by Nonny Hogrogian

*The Crock of Gold* by Joseph Jacobs illustrated by William Stobbs

*The Piney Woods Peddler* told by George Shannon

*Timothy Todd's Goods Are Gone* by Anne Rockwell

*A Bear, a Bobcat, and Three Ghosts* by Anne Rockwell

*The Gollywhopper Egg* by Anne Rockwell

*The Monkeys and the Peddler* by Susanne Suba

*The Peddlers* by Leonard Everett Fisher

#### Books about Monkeys:

the Curious George books by H. A. Rey

*Jacko* by John S. Goodall

*Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* retold and illustrated by Eileen Christelow

#### Other Books by Esphyr Slobodkina

*Billy, the Condominium Cat*

*Pezzo the Peddler and the 13 Silly Thieves*

*Pezzo the Peddler and the Circus Elephant*

## CAPS FOR SALE TEST

### Part I Comprehension (10 points each)

Fill in the blank in each sentence with the correct word from the list below.

monkeys      ground      nap      checks      angry

1. The peddler's own cap had black and white \_\_\_\_\_ on it.
2. The peddler sat down under a tree and took a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. While the peddler was sleeping, some \_\_\_\_\_ took his caps.
4. The peddler was very \_\_\_\_\_ because he could not get his caps back.
5. When the peddler threw down his cap, the monkeys threw their caps on the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part II Vocabulary (10 points each)

Find the correct definition below for each underlined word. Write the letter of the correct definition in each blank.

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| ___ 1. Some <u>peddlers</u> carry their goods in a cart.                   | A. usual; normal          |
| ___ 2. But the peddler in this story was not an <u>ordinary</u> peddler.   | B. bother; mess up        |
| ___ 3. The peddler sold caps and he carried his <u>wares</u> on his head.  | C. people who sell things |
| ___ 4. The peddler sat down slowly so he wouldn't <u>disturb</u> his caps. | D. things that are sold   |
| ___ 5. After a short nap, he felt <u>refreshed</u> .                       | E. rested                 |

## Extra Word Study

Following is a list of vocabulary words which may be unfamiliar to your students along with a suggestion for introducing each word:

1. peddler p.2 (see Introductory Activities)
2. ordinary p. 2 Make a list of activities that are ordinary (ie. taking a bath, playing outside, riding a bike, etc.). Then make another list of activities that are out of the ordinary (ie. traveling to the moon, being kidnapped, etc.).
3. wares p. 2 Write the following words across the top of the chalkboard: bakery, drug store, hardware store, toy store. Have students list some of the wares that would be found in each of these stores.
4. disturb p.8 Talk about different ways that people can be disturbed.
  - A. bothered when you are doing something (example: You disturbed my rest.)
  - B. messed up belongings (example: You disturbed my papers.)
  - C. made you feel worried (example: I'm disturbed about the fight.)
5. refreshed p.12 Have students share something that makes them feel refreshed. (ie. a good sleep, a swim on a hot day, etc.)

## CAPS FOR SALE ANSWER KEY

### Part I

1. checks
2. nap
3. monkeys
4. angry
5. ground

### Part II

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. B
5. E



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