

Ira Sleeps Over

by Bernard Waber

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Jennifer Lee Richards

A Perma-Bound Production

Synopsis

Ira has been invited to spend the night with his friend Reggie. Ira has a problem, though - he has never slept without his teddy bear. Ira's sister says Reggie will laugh at Ira's teddy bear, especially when he finds out its name is "Tah Tah."

Ira listens all day to the fantastic plans Reggie has for their slumber party, but he can't stop thinking about his teddy bear. Ira finally decides Reggie will think he is a baby to have a teddy bear so he leaves it at home.

Ira almost forgets he even has a teddy bear when he and Reggie are playing that night until it's lights out and Reggie starts telling ghost stories. But Reggie stops to get something small and fuzzy out of his dresser: a teddy bear named "Foo Foo"!

When Ira comes back for "Tah Tah," his family is surprised. His sister says Reggie will fall down laughing but Ira knows he won't.

Biographical Sketch

Bernard Waber was born on September 27, 1924 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His mother emigrated from Russia, his father from Austria. He was the youngest of four children.

Waber married Ethel Bernstein in 1952. They have three children. They live in the town of Baldwin on Long Island in New York.

Waber served in the U.S. Army from 1942-45 where he became a staff sergeant. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia College of Art, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Waber was a commercial artist for Conde Nast Publications and "Seventeen" magazine, both in New York City, between 1952-54. He went on to be a graphic designer at "Life" magazine. He has been an author and illustrator of children's books since 1961 when his first book, *Lorenzo*, was published by Houghton. He has worked as a graphic designer at "People" magazine in New York City since 1974.

Waber was raised during the years of the Great Depression and his family had to move often. He said, "Books were my companions during my growing up years in Philadelphia. We changed addresses frequently, as frequently as one of our family businesses failed." He said his family moved, "by the light of the moon and one step ahead of the sheriff's knock."

About his early experiences with books and reading Waber said, "By my reasoning the library and the cinema were life-giving urgencies, a survival kit for any neighborhood." "I would borrow a book from the library, hopeful that a good companion had been chosen for the next week or so."

When Waber was eight years old he got a job in a cinema raising theater seats upright and cleaning up dropped candy wrappers. He would often catch just the end of a feature film. He said, "I would try to reconstruct what I imagined to be the beginning and the middle. It occurs to me that this was my earliest attempt at plotting, which may or may not account for the frequency with which endings to my own stories come to me before I have realized earlier developments."

Waber was majoring in finance when his schooling was interrupted by World War II. He said, "I received respectable grades in art classes during my school years, but I doubt I thought it seriously indicated a career direction. Perhaps art seemed too frivolous for one raised during the depression.... But somehow during those army days my interest shifted to drawing and painting."

About writing Waber said, "I seem to write best when in motion. Trains, subways, even elevators seem to shake ideas loose from my head. I like to take think-walks, and have put sentences together crossing Fifth Avenue. Although I write and illustrate, I believe if forced to choose between the two, I would choose writing. There is a freedom about writing that appeals to me. You can do it almost anywhere, and I have."

Critic's Corner

Bernard Waber received the *New York Herald Tribune's* Children's Spring Book Festival picture book honor for *The House on 88th Street* in 1962. His book, *An Anteater Named Arthur* was selected as one of the American Institute of Graphic Arts Children's Books in 1967-68. His book, *A Firefly Named Torchy* received the "Boston Globe-Horn Book" honor book in 1971. His book, *But Names Will Never Hurt Me* was selected as one of the Child Study Association's Children's Books of the Year in 1976. He received the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award in 1979 for *Lyle, Lyle Crocodile* and his book *The Snake: A Very Long Story* was selected as one of the International Reading Association's Children's Choices in 1979.

Ira Sleeps Over was included in the Children's Book Showcase of the Children's Book Council in 1973. It has been made into a film by Phoenix/BFA Films. Live Oak Media has produced a cassette and a filmstrip with a cassette of the book.

Bernard Waber is known for his books in which Lyle the Crocodile is the star character. Waber's home is filled with "crocodilia" that has mostly been given to his family by friends and readers of his Lyle books. Among the Lyle memorabilia is a crocodile-shaped loaf of bread from France, a claw-footed bathtub like the one Lyle bathes in (found at a flea market), and crocodile decorated dishware.

Objectives

1. To discuss security
2. To discuss sibling relationships
3. To have children exposed to familiar experiences in order to understand empathy

Comprehension/Discussion Questions

1. After reading the Biographical Sketch and Critic's Corner sections to your class, discuss the time period of the Great Depression. Discuss what a flea market and subways are. Have students ever been to a flea market or on a subway? Share stories.
2. Discuss how many of the students have siblings. Are the students the youngest, somewhere in the middle, or the oldest? Do their siblings tease them? Do they tease their siblings? Share related experiences.
3. Discuss the experience of sleeping over at someone's house. How many of the students have done this? Share stories.
4. Discuss teddy bears. How many students have one? When did they get it? How many different types does the class have? Do the students have names for their teddy bear? How did they get its name? Discuss if some students sleep with a teddy bear or another security item. Why do the students have such strong feelings for their special bear, blanket, toy, or other item?
5. Decide what medium Bernard Waber used to make the illustrations. (Paint, pen and maybe some sponge printing.)
6. When Ira first decides not to take his teddy bear, stop reading, and discuss why the students think Ira decides against taking his bear over to Reggie's. When reading the story aloud stop each time Ira changes his mind about taking his teddy bear to Reggie's and take a vote as to whether the students feel Ira should or should not take his bear. Why?
7. Notice what season the illustrations and storyline lead the reader to believe it is set in. Discuss what hints make the reader feel it is summer.
8. Identify the pets Ira's family has in their home (goldfish, a cat, a bird). Discuss what pets your students have. Notice the cat playing with the ball. How many students have cats that like balls?
9. Name the instrument Ira's father is playing (cello). Discuss how many students play instruments. How many of their parents do? Notice Ira's sister is at the piano. How many of the students can play the piano?
10. Have students share stories about when someone laughed at them for "being a baby" or something similar. How did it make them feel?
11. Notice the buildings and houses are close together with not much yard space. Discuss how this is a similar or different environment from the way the students live. (The houses look as if they are in a city. They look like the brownstones in Brooklyn, New York which is what Waber modeled Lyle the Crocodile's house after.)
12. Notice the city bus. Ask how many students have ever been on a city bus. Notice the "No Parking" sign beside which a car is parked (illegally).
13. Ask the students why they think Reggie is suddenly in a rush to leave right after Ira has asked him about teddy bears.
14. Notice what Ira's family is having for dinner. (Looks like spaghetti, bread and salad.) Ask who likes spaghetti. Ask if it is a regular family meal. Find out how spaghetti is served in different homes. Ex: with or without meatballs, cut up, or long and winding, with mushrooms, parmesan cheese, onions, etc. Tally results. How many include garlic bread?
15. Notice Ira's father is in the kitchen. Ask the students if they feel he is helping to cook or just taste testing the sauce? Discuss how this relates to job sharing in the students' home.
16. Discuss the fact that the children are setting the table. How many students have this as their job? What other chores do the students do at home?
17. Notice how pink Reggie's hair is in the pictures. Is this realistic?
18. Notice how when Ira goes "next door" he only needs to climb over a fence that is between the two family's porches. How many students have lived in a duplex? What is it like?
19. Notice the fern tree prints above Ira's head on page 21 and later on the porch. Waber has placed these gray and black leaf patterns where they would not normally be. Discuss why and how he might have done this.
20. Discuss how the students think Reggie and Ira played "office." How would they play office? Discuss and define the terms: personal and confidential, cancelled, duplicate, urgent, rush, attention, special delivery, first class, void, paid, not paid, this side up, air mail, and second notice and why stamps reading them would be used at an office.
21. Have students try to remember the activities Reggie said he and Ira would do at his house that they didn't get to do. Check pages 16 and 18, and pages 28-35 to see if they named them all.
22. Notice that Ira is sleeping on a fold-up cot. How many of the students have slept on one? When? Do they have bunk beds? Twin beds? Or do they use sleeping bags when a friend spends the night. Share stories. Do any of the students share a room? Discuss what this is like.

23. Discuss ghosts and whether or not the students believe in them.
24. Ask the students why they think Reggie got his bear. Also, ask the students why they think Reggie's teddy bear was in his dresser drawer.
25. Ira promises Reggie that he won't laugh at his teddy bear's name. Ask the students what a promise is. Have the students ever kept one? broken one? Have they ever had a friend keep one or break one? Share stories.
26. When Ira returns home and says, "I changed my mind," what does his family think he changed his mind about?
27. How many of the students have an upstairs in their home? Discuss differences in the students' homes.
28. Discuss the expression Ira's sister used, "(He's just going to) fall down laughing." How does Ira know Reggie won't laugh at his teddy bear?
29. Compare Ira and his sister's relationship to that of Charles Schulz's characters, Lucy and Linus. Think of what Lucy would do if Linus was thinking of taking his blanket to his first sleep over. How are the relationships similar?

Student Activities

1. Read the book aloud to or along with your students. Also, read other books illustrated and/or written by Bernard Waber.
2. Try to paint like Bernard Waber. Use some sponges or a patterned cut eraser to make designs similar to the repeated ones Waber created.
3. Read other books about teddy bears or real bears. Make art and craft items that relate to bears.
4. Research about teddy bears, real bears and share stories about them. Have students bring in their own teddy bears and share stories about them.
5. Have a real or a mock sleep over party in your classroom. Play checkers and dominoes, do magic tricks, and have students bring in their collections to share.
6. See if any students have friends or relatives that can share their stamp, coin, doll or any other interesting collection. Discuss the "value" of collections. Some are worth money while others are kept for sentimental or historical reasons.
7. Notice Reggie and Ira's bedrooms. How are they similar to the students' rooms? Have the students draw their rooms as they

picture them from memory. Assign students a number to put on the back of their drawing. Collect these pictures. For homework, have the students sit in their bedrooms and draw what they see. Have them put their secret number on the back again. Collect these. Divide a wall space in half and display the "before" pictures on the left side and the "after" pictures on the other. Can students recognize pairs of pictures? Have students guess pairs and remove the correctly guessed pairs. Were the pictures easy to match? Were the students surprised by the similarities or differences between their first and second pictures? Discuss the activity.

8. Gain access to someone who can play the cello for the class to hear or get a sound recording of one being played.
9. How many of the students know how to set a table? Have them prove it. Have a timed table setting contest. Having students compete in pairs is fun.
10. Find Reggie's egg timer shown in the book. Bring in an egg timer and time how long it takes for the sand to move from one side to the other. Time students doing simple exercises such as how many hops they can do in the time period.
11. Send postcards to someone. Play with a variety of rubber stamps. Taste test the different sodas shown on pages 28 and 29. Graph the results. Ask students which their family buys more often, bottles or cans of soda? Graph the results.
12. Use magnifying glasses for an experiment.
13. Have students say, "Bedtime," as they feel Reggie's father did. Vote on who was the most realistic.
14. Tape record students reading Reggie's ghost story aloud. Listen by candlelight to the tape as a class and decide which students give the scariest versions. Tell other ghost stories while gathered around in candlelight. Research about ghosts.
15. Research about Igor Oistrakh whose name is on the record album Ira's father is holding on page 40.
16. Imitate how Reggie would look if he were to "fall down laughing" as Ira's sister said he would.

Bibliography

ed. Commire, Anne. *Something About the Author: Facts and Pictures About Authors and Illustrators of Books for Young People*, Vol 47, 1987.

The Trumpet Club's "Author of-the-Month" packet written by Ellen Rudin, 1990.

Vocabulary Test

Connect the following separated compound words and place them in the correct sentence.

- | | | |
|----|----------|-----------|
| A. | A. after | 1. night |
| | B. up | 2. body |
| | C. post | 3. bell |
| | D. to | 4. light |
| | E. bed | 5. stairs |
| | F. no | 6. noon |
| | G. flash | 7. time |
| | H. door | 8. card |
| | I. with | 9. place |
| | J. some | 10. out |

- B.
1. I wanted to see if Bob could come out to play so I rang the _____ and waited for him to answer.
 2. When my grandparents went away for a few weeks, they sent me a _____ from every new place they visited.
 3. My _____ is at 8 o'clock.
 4. _____ my dad and I are going to look for the North Star.
 5. He lit up the dark cave by turning on his big red _____.
 6. I am so sad, _____ sent me a Valentine.
 7. This _____ I am playing baseball at the park with my friends until it starts to get dark.
 8. I had to run _____ to my room to get my teddy bear.
 9. We are going on a trip to _____ far away.
 10. I am too hungry to go _____ lunch.

Comprehension Test

Draw a line to match the following characters to the correct related information about them.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Ira | A. plays the cello |
| 2. Ira's sister | B. is named "Tah Tah" |
| 3. Ira's teddy bear | C. couldn't decide whether to take his teddy bear to a sleepover at a friend's house |
| 4. Reggie | D. is named "Foo Foo" |
| 5. Ira's father | E. thought Reggie would laugh at Ira |
| 6. Reggie's teddy bear | F. has a junk collection |

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Test

A. A. 6 B. 5 C. 8 D. 1 E. 7 F. 2 G. 4 H. 3 I. 10 J. 9

B. 1. doorbell 2. postcard 3. bedtime 4. Tonight 5. flashlight
6. nobody 7. afternoon 8. upstairs 9. someplace 10. without

Comprehension Test

1. C 2. E 3. B 4. F 5. A 6. D

TEACHER'S NOTES



**PERMA-BOUND
VANDALIA ROAD
JACKSONVILLE, ILLINOIS
62650**

**PHONE
1-800-637-6581**