



# Miss Nelson Is Missing!

by James Marshall

## Teacher's Guide

Written By Pam Spinner



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## Synopsis

The students in Miss Nelson's class are so horrible that she can't take it anymore! She decides to take a few days off from work and sends in a substitute teacher who really whips the class into shape. The only problem is that none of the students like the substitute because she is so mean and ugly. They want Miss Nelson back desperately but can't find her anywhere. Finally Miss Nelson returns and her class is overjoyed to see her. Miss Nelson will never tell that the substitute teacher, Viola Swamp, was in reality Miss Nelson herself!

## Author Sketch

**James Marshall** (October 10, 1942 - October 13, 1992) was born in San Antonio, Texas, a children's author and illustrator and was born in San Antonio, Texas where he grew up on his family's farm. A self-taught artist, he attended Trinity College and New England Conservatory of Music, but he never attended college for art.

He illustrated more than seventy books, many his own creations, such as *George and Martha*, the lovable hippos; *the Stupids*; and *the Cut-Ups*. He is also well-known for his *Fox and Miss Nelson* series. He lived between an apartment in the Chelsea district of New York and had a home in Mansfield Hollow Connecticut.

**Harry Allard** was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1928, and graduated from Amundsen High School and Northwestern University in Evanston before going on to get an M.A. in French from Middlebury College and a Ph.D. in French Literature from Yale University in 1972. He used his language skills to work as a translator. In the early 1970s, he teamed up with his friend James Marshall to write a number of children's books, including the *Miss Nelson* series and the *Stupids* series, until Marshall's death in 1992. Allard currently lives in Mexico.

## Critic's Corner

A beloved artist and illustrator, James Marshall was known for eliciting a whole range of emotions with just a few pen strokes. "No one around can match Mr. Marshall's witty way with words and pictures," said the *New York Times Book Review* said in 1984.

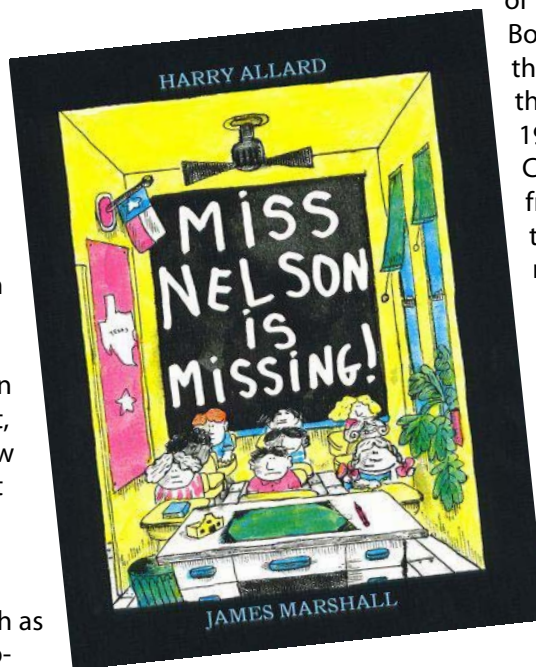
*Miss Nelson Is Missing!* was selected one of the *New York Times* Outstanding Books of Year in 1977. In 1981 it won the Ariana Young Readers Award and the California Young Readers Award in 1982. It also won the Buckeye Children's Book Award honor book from the State Library of Ohio. He said that the character of Viola Swamp was modeled after a much-disliked second-grade teacher who told him he would never learn to draw.

In addition to his other awards, Marshall won a University of Mississippi Silver Medallion in 1992, and received the Caldecott Honor in 1989 for *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. In 2007, the American Library Association posthumously honored Marshall with the Laura Ingalls Wilder medal for his "sub-

stantial and lasting contribution to literature for children."

## Timeline

- Beginning** The kids in Room 207 are misbehaving again. Soft-spoken Miss Nelson is at the end of her rope. She decides to take a vacation for a few days.
- Then** A substitute, Viola Swamp, arrives in class. She is unlike Miss Nelson: tough, harsh, and unattractive, she "means business!"
- Later** The kids, missing Miss Nelson and desperate to get away from Viola Swamp, look everywhere for their regular teacher, but they can't find her.
- Finally** Miss Nelson returns. The ecstatic kids



are well-behaved! When she returns home, Miss Nelson hangs up her clothes—next to Viola Swamps! The harsh substitute was really Miss Nelson after all. She vows never to tell her students.

## Selected Other Works by James Marshall

*Eugene*

*Four Little Troubles*

*Four on the Shore*

*Fox at School*

*Fox Be Nimble*

*Fox on Wheels*

*George and Martha series*

*Hey Diddle Diddle*

*James Marshall's Mother Goose*

*Merry Christmas, Space Case*

*Miss Nelson series (with Harry Allard)*

*Portly McSwine*

*The Stupids series (with Harry Allard)*

*Yummers!*

*Yummers Too! The Second Course*

## Bibliography

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"Harry Allard Biography,"  
<http://us.macmillan.com/author/harryallard>

"Biography of James Marshall,"  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Marshall\\_\(author\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Marshall_(author))

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"James Marshall, 50, an Illustrator and an Author for Children, Dies," by Bruce Lambert, *New York Times*, October 15, 1992 (retrieved online)

## Goals and Objectives

1. To predict an outcome
2. To recall details
3. To compare and contrast people and ideas
4. To write a short story

Note: It is suggested to read *Miss Nelson is Missing* up to and including page 24. (Do not yet read the ending.) Use the discussion questions up to page 24. After completing these questions, give the students an opportunity to predict an ending to the story. After several possible endings have been shared, read the ending of the story.

## Meaning Study

Here are some new words you will find in *Miss Nelson is Missing*.

1. Spitballs were stuck to the ceiling. Paper planes whizzed through the air. The kids in Room 207 were misbehaving again.  
(*Misbehaving means doing something that you know you aren't supposed to do. It means being bad.*)
2. The students were rude during story hour. They always refused to do their lessons.  
(*Refused means to say you will not do something. If you turn down someone's offer of a cookie, you refuse it.*)
3. Miss Nelson told the class to settle down. The class would not settle down.  
(*Settle down means to stop acting wild and start being good. Miss Nelson wants the class to be quiet and listen to her.*)
4. A woman in an ugly black dress was their new teacher. "I am Miss Viola Swamp," she hissed in an unpleasant voice.  
(*Miss Swamp's voice sounded nasty and mean - like a cat or a snake that's ready to strike.*)
5. Miss Swamp was a real witch.  
(*This means Miss Swamp is both mean and ugly. She does not have magic powers or a flying broom!*)
6. Miss Swamp put the students right to work. She gave them lots of homework. She meant business.  
(*If Miss Swamp means business, she doesn't want the students to have fun! She means what she says about homework.*)
7. Days went by and there was no sign of Miss Nelson. The kids missed Miss Nelson!  
(*If there is no sign of Miss Nelson, that means the children had not seen her, talked to her, or heard any news about her.*)
8. The kids in Room 207 looked everywhere for Miss Nelson. It seemed that she was never coming back. They became very discouraged.  
(*Discouraged means upset, unhappy, without hope.*)

## Comprehension Study

Pages 3-24

1. Name as many things as you can remember which Miss Nelson's class did that were not good.  
(*throwing spitballs, throwing paper airplanes, whispering, giggling, squirming, making faces, being rude, and refusing to do lessons*)
2. In what room were Miss Nelson's students?  
(*Room 207*)

3. What grade would you guess they were in? Why do you think so?  
*(They are probably in second grade, because they are learning addition and subtraction with regrouping (pg. 13 - on the board); their size; they still have a story hour. Any other reasonable answers can be accepted)*
4. How do you think Miss Nelson was feeling in the beginning of the story?  
*(upset; angry; mad; frustrated)*
5. What did the students decide to do when they saw that they had a substitute?  
*(They decided to really act up now!)*
6. Describe Miss Viola Swamp.  
*(Accept any reasonable answer.)*
7. How were the students different for Miss Swamp?  
*(They behaved; they listened)*
8. Where did the students go for help? Did they find help here?  
*(to Detective McSmogg and the police; no)*
9. What did Miss Nelson's house look like when the students went there?  
*(The shades were drawn, no one answered the door; it looked like no one was home)*
10. Who did they see by Miss Nelson's house?  
*(Miss Viola Swamp)*
11. Why did they run away?  
*(They didn't want more homework.)*
12. What do the students think happened to Miss Nelson?  
*(She was gobbled up by a shark; something terrible; she went to Mars; she was carried off by a swarm of angry butterflies.)*
13. What do you think happened to Miss Nelson?  
*(Answers will vary.)*
14. How do you think this story will end?  
*(Answers will vary.)*

**After page 24**

1. How did the students know Miss Nelson was back before they even saw her?  
*(They heard a sweet voice.)*
2. How did the students feel now?  
*(happy; excited)*
3. How did the students act now?  
*(They were good; they listened and followed directions)*
4. Why do you think they acted differently?  
*(they wanted Miss Nelson to stay; they were happy she was back; they realized they were bad)*
5. What secret did the students tell Miss Nelson they had?  
*(What brought about the change, Miss Viola*

*Swamp)*

6. How was Miss Nelson feeling now?  
*(happy; satisfied)*
7. What familiar thing was hanging in Miss Nelson's closet? Why do you think it was there?  
*(the ugly black dress; because Miss Viola Swamp was really Miss Nelson in disguise.)*
8. What secret does Miss Nelson have?  
*(that she was really Miss Viola Swamp)*
9. What is Detective McSmogg doing now?  
*(looking for Miss Viola Swamp)*

**Student Involvement Activities**

1. Discuss things that students usually do wrong when a substitute teacher is in the room. List students' responses on the board. Let the students choose one of these things to illustrate, or, if skills allow, let students write a short paragraph about one of the behaviors listed.
2. Let students write and illustrate their own short story about having a substitute teacher.
3. Use students' own classroom rules. Find what the students in Miss Nelson's room did wrong and which rule in their own classroom they are breaking.
4. Show Miss Nelson's students on page 9 of the book and page 29. Tell how each student is different in these pictures. Also tell how they are the same in these pictures.
5. Give students worksheets with blank squares. Instruct students to draw a picture of a student "being good" in one square of worksheet #1, then draw the same students "being bad" on worksheet #2. Tell them some things are to be the same on each student and some things are to be different. Then have students exchange worksheets and identify things that are the same and things that are different. The teacher can introduce the terms compare and contrast here.
6. Students can bring in pictures of themselves. They can compare and contrast how they look the same in the pictures and how they look different.
7. Students can compare and contrast Miss Nelson to Miss Viola Swamp.

## Vocabulary Test

Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the list below.

refuse

smart

misbehaving

unpleasant

missed

discouraged

1. The students in Miss Nelson's class were always \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. The students would not do their work. They would always \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. Miss Viola Swamp's voice was very \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. The students wanted Miss Nelson back. They \_\_\_\_\_ her.
  5. Detective McSmogg was not very \_\_\_\_\_.
- The students felt \_\_\_\_\_ because they could not find Miss Nelson.

## **Comprehension Test**

### **Part I: Same and Different (10 points)**

Read each sentence. Write the word SAME on the line if it tells you how things are alike. Write the word DIFFERENT on the line if it tells you how things are not alike.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Andy had his homework done, but Jerry did not.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Sara and Amy were both wearing red dresses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Both of our birthdays are on November 14.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Joey is 9 years old and his brother is 11 years old.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. We have spelling homework on Monday and Wednesday.

### **Part II: Sentence Writing (10 points)**

- 1. Write a sentence telling about two things that are the same.
- 2. Write a sentence telling about two things that are different.

## **Answer Key**

### **VOCABULARY TEST**

1. misbehaving
  2. refuse
  3. unpleasant
  4. missed
  5. smart
- discouraged

### **COMPREHENSION TEST**

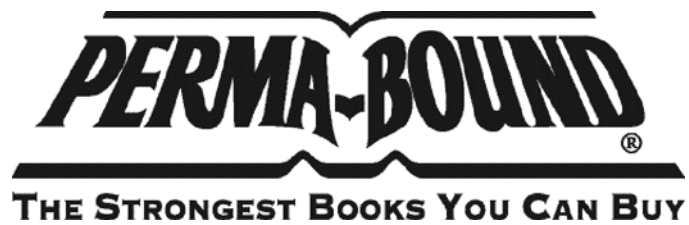
#### **Part I: Same and Different (10 points)**

1. different
  2. same
  3. same
  4. different
- same

#### **Part II: Sentence Writing (10 points)**

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.





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