



The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo

by Judy Blume



Teacher's Guide
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CLASSROOM
FAVORITES

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Synopsis

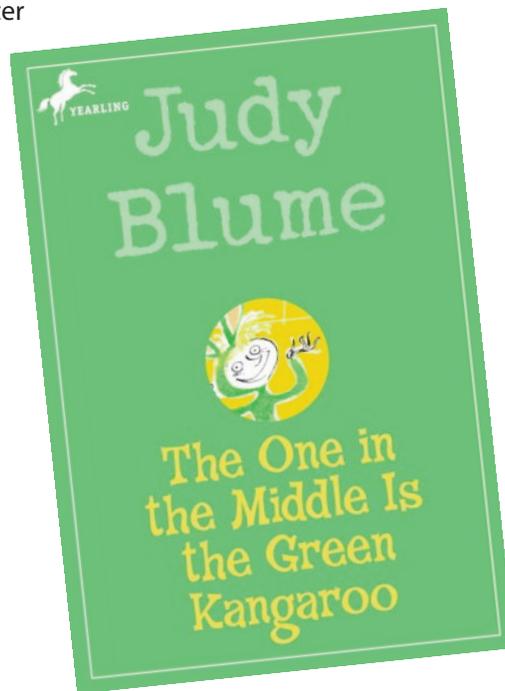
This appealing story focuses on Freddy Dissel, a middle child who feels he has no special place for himself in his family, squeezed between his two siblings “like the peanut butter part of a sandwich.” Older brother Mike gets new clothes each year, while Freddy has to wear Mike’s outgrown clothes. Younger sister Ellen has taken over Freddy’s old room, so now Freddy has to share Mike’s room. Mike and his friends won’t let Freddy play with them, and Ellen messes everything up when Freddy tries to play with her. Freddy glumly figures he will always be “a great big middle nothing!”

Then one day at school, Freddy hears about the school play. He tells his second-grade teacher, Ms. Gumber, that he wants to be in the play. When she replies that the play is only for fifth and sixth graders—“like Mike”—Freddy mutters, “That figures!” Ms. Gumber, sensitively understanding Freddy’s problem, talks to Ms. Matson, who is in charge of the play. Freddy gets an audition that afternoon in the school auditorium. At Ms. Matson’s direction, Freddy onstage loudly declaims “I WANT TO BE IN THE PLAY!” and jumps all around with abandon. Ms. Matson awards him the “very important” part of the Green Kangaroo.

At home that evening around the dinner table, Freddy importantly announces that he is going to be the Green Kangaroo in the school play. Mike chokes and knocks over his milk. While Mom and Dad congratulate Freddy, Mike sits with a very glum look on his face and Freddy smiles complacently. Freddy practices very hard for the next two weeks.

On the day of the play, backstage, Freddy gets into his Green Kangaroo costume. It covers all of him except his face, which Ms. Matson adorns with green spots. When it is time for Freddy to step onstage and deliver the play’s opening lines, his stomach gets fluttery. But he knows he has a job to do, so he beats down his nervousness and confidently welcomes the audience in his big stage voice, all alone in the spotlight. All through the play, the other actors ask Freddy, “And who are you?” Freddy jumps all around and answers, “Me? I am the Green Kangaroo!” Every time Freddy repeats this, his only line, the audience laughs, which makes Freddy feel good. When the play is over, Freddy takes a separate big, low bow all by himself, and the audience claps hard for a long time.

After this, Freddy doesn’t care much about being a squeezed-in middle child. “He felt just great being Freddy Dissel!”



Timeline

- ca. 3 years ago** Ellen is born; Freddy loses his room, moves in with Mike.
- present** Freddy feels like a middle nothing, squeezed between his siblings.
- at school** Freddy hears about the school play, tries out, and gets the part of the Green Kangaroo.
- That evening** Freddy tells his family he has a part in the school play.
- Next two weeks** Freddy practices a lot for being the Green Kangaroo.
- Day of play** Freddy gets into his costume, gets nervous, goes on stage, gives a great performance, takes a solo bow, and

Afterward

basks in the applause. Freddy no longer cares much about being the one in the middle; he feels great just being Freddy Dissel.

Author Sketch

Judy Blume's frank—and often humorous—fictional treatment of young people's concerns has made her one of the most popular and controversial writers of preteen and teen books. Blume was born Judy Sussman in 1938 in suburban New Jersey, where she grew up, the daughter of a dentist and a housewife. She was an imaginative child who constantly made up stories in her head, although she never wrote down these tales. After graduating from an all-girl public high school, she attended Boston University and then New York University. She married lawyer John Blume in 1959, received her B.A. in 1960, and then settled down as a suburban housewife, caring for the children, a daughter and son born in 1961 and 1963.



Seeking an outlet for her creative energies in 1966, Blume began writing rhyming books—all rejected by publishers—and then took a course at NYU on writing for children. Soon she had sold several stories, and her first book, *The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo*, was accepted for publication, appearing in 1969. This was followed in 1970 by *Iggie's House*, a book Blume had written chapter by chapter for her writing course.

Blume rocketed to popularity, and controversy, with *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, published in 1970. This was one of the first novels to deal frankly with preteen issues, in this case the onset of menstruation and budding breasts, along with a search for religious identity. In *Margaret*, Blume established her style: direct, humorous, accessible, first-person, dealing with real issues in her readers' lives expressed in an authentic preteen/teen voice. As a result, Blume's readers feel a deep connection with Blume's characters. Calls for censorship began with *Margaret* and have continued through most of Blume's subsequent novels for preteens and teens, although her books for younger readers remain unscathed. Issues in Blume's books include cruel harassment of an overweight girl (*Blubber*), social snobbery and male puberty (*Then Again, Maybe I Won't*),

divorce (*It's Not the End of the World*), physical deformity (*Deenie*), coping with a parent's death (*Tiger Eyes*), and entering your first sexual relationship (*Forever*). *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself* is Blume's most autobiographical novel. She has written several popular adult novels that also explore their characters' experiences and feelings, again in a straightforward and humorous writing style.

In her personal life, Blume divorced her first husband in 1975 and then rushed into an unsatisfying second marriage, which brought her to New Mexico. She divorced again in 1978 but remained in Santa Fe until 1985, when she moved to Connecticut. In 1987, she married nonfiction writer George Cooper; now they split their time between homes on Martha's Vineyard (setting for Blume's adult novel *Summer Sisters*), Key West, and New York City. Blume's response to her would-be censors has been to become an outspoken activist for anti-censorship organizations. In 1981 she founded The Kids Fund, financed by royalties from several of her books; it supports various nonprofit organizations that help young people communicate with their parents. Blume and her books have won numerous awards, including many children's choice awards and, in 1996, the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the American Library Association for outstanding contribution to literature for young adults. More than 65 million Judy Blume books have been sold worldwide.

Illustrator Sketch

Irene Trivas was born in Germany and lived in Paris before coming to the United States. She studied art in Los Angeles at the Art Center School, then worked as an art director and an animation designer and director in New York City before turning to a career as a children's book illustrator and author. She has lived in Vermont since the 1980s, most recently in West Newbury. Trivas has illustrated many popular children's books and has also written several self-illustrated picture books.

Critics' Corner

Judy Blume's books for younger readers have escaped the critical and censorship controversies that swirl around her books for preteen and teen readers. Her wildly popular Fudge books, centered on Peter's feelings of sibling rivalry toward his younger brother, are praised for their humor and lively action and dialogue. Her well-received book *The Pain and the Great One* also focuses amusingly on sibling rivalry, which is again a

main theme in *Green Kangaroo*. Critics generally agree that *Green Kangaroo* treats the middle child problem lightly but effectively. *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* noted that the book treats "a real problem in a believable way, and as a story it is satisfying." *Booklist* commented, "Though the message is direct and simple, it is smoothly executed and amusing."

The book's enduring popularity is attested to by the publication of new editions, one in 1981 with revised and updated text and new illustrations, and the current one in 1991 with the 1981 text and all-new illustrations by Irene Trivas. The original edition featured turquoise and yellow illustrations by Lois Axeman, which were replaced in 1981 with Amy Aitken's simple black line drawings brightened by the bright, lime green kangaroo costume. The 1991 illustrations by Trivas in bright watercolor wash and black crayon line have garnered the most critical approval. *School Library Journal* admired Trivas's "bright [and] lively renderings." *Booklist* judged that "Trivas's bouncy, good-natured illustrations seem destined to charm even the most critical viewers."

Books by Judy Blume

Books for Young Readers

The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo (1969; revised editions 1981, 1991)
Freckle Juice (1971)
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing (1972)
Superfudge (1980)
The Pain and the Great One (1984)
Fudge-A-Mania (1990)
It's Super to Be Six! (2000)

Books for Preteen/Young Teen Readers

Iggie's House (1970)
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret (1970)
Then Again, Maybe I Won't (1971)
Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great (1972)
It's Not the End of the World (1972)
Deenie (1973)
Blubber (1974)
Starring Sally .1. Freedman as Herself (1977)
Just As Long As We're Together (1987)
Here c to You, Rachel Robinson (1993)

Books for Young Adults

Forever (1975)
Tiger Eyes (1981)

Books for Adults

Wifey (1977)
Smart Women (1984)
Letters to Judy: What Your Kids Wish They Could Tell You (1986)
Summer Sisters (1998)

Books by Irene Trivas

Writer-Illustrator

Emma's Christmas: An Old Song Re-sung & Pictured (1988)
Annie-Anyia: A Month in Moscow (1992)

Illustrator

Snip, by Nathaniel Benchley (1981)
The Pain and the Great One, by Judy Blume (1984)
The Fourth Floor Twins series, by David Adler (1985 and later)
One-Eyed Cat, by Paula Fox (1985 printing)
Messy Mark, by Sharon Peters (1989)
My Mother's House, My Father's House, by C.B. Christiansen (1989)
Stars, by Roy Wandelmaier (1989)
The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo, by Judy Blume (1991)
Who Will Pick Me Up When I Fall? by Dorothy Molnar et al. (1991)
Fathers and Babies, by Jean Marzollo (1993)
Pajama Party, by Amy Hest (1994)
Three Perfect Peaches: A French Folktale, by Cynthia Defelice (1995)
Soccer Cousins, by Jena Marzollo (1997)
Trouble on the T-Ball Team, by Eve Bunting (1997)
What's the Matter with Mother Goose, by Jean Marzollo (2000)
One Lucky Girl, by George Ella Lyon (2000)

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Booklist, October 1, 1981, p. 191; Oct. 15, 1991, p. 446.
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, April 1970, p. 125.
Children's Literature Review, Vols. 15. Detroit: Gale, 1988.
Contemporary Authors New Revision Series, Vol. 66. Detroit: Gale, 1998.

Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vols. 12 & 20. Detroit: Gale Research, 1980, 1984.

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Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol 52. Detroit: Gale, 1986.

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"Judy Blume: The Queen of Preteen Fiction Hits Home with Her Grown-up Fans," *People Weekly*, Dec. 28, 1998, p. 80.

Klein, Norma, "Some Thoughts on Censorship: An Author Symposium," *Top of the News*, Winter 1983, pp. 137-53.

Lee, Betsy. *Judy Blume's Story*. Minneapolis: Dillon, 1981. *Library Journal*, Dec. 15, 1969, p. 4593.

Maynard, Joyce, "Coming of Age with Judy Blume," *New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 2, 1978, pp. 228ff.

Oppenheimer, Mark, "Why Judy Blume Endures," *New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 16, 1997, pp. 44-45.

Rockman, Connie C. *Eighth Book of Junior Authors and illustrators*. NY: H.W. Wilson, 2000.

School Library Journal, October 1981, p. 126; September 1991, pp. 226-27.

Siegel, R.A., "Are You There, God? It's Me, Me, Me! Judy Blume's Self-Absorbed Narrators," *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Fall 1978, pp. 72-77.

Something About the Author Vol. 79. Detroit: Gale, 1995.

Sutton, Mark, "An Interview with Judy Blume: Forever. . .Yours," *School Library Journal*, June 1996, pp. 25-27.

Vincent, Isabel, "A Heroine for Children," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), Nov. 17, 1990, p. C10.

Weidt, Maryann, *Presenting Judy Blume*. Boston: Twayne, 1989.

Wintle, Justin, "Judy Blume," in *The Pied Pipers*, by Wintle and Emma Fisher. London: Paddington, 1974.

"Judy Blume on the Web," <www.judyblume.com/>

"Judy Blume," <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judy_Blume>

"Judy Blume interview": <januarymagazine.com/profiles/blume.html>

"Judy Blume profile": <www.teenreads.com/authors/blume-judy.asp>

General Objectives

1. To use discussion questions to recall details, interpret characters and events, read or listen critically, and respond creatively to the story and its illustrations
2. To expand vocabulary through context clues and word study
3. To expand responses to the book by completing a variety of related activities, some in other areas of the curriculum
4. To exercise artistic, craft, and dramatic skills to help interpret reading

Specific Objectives

1. To understand why Freddy is unhappy with his position as middle child in his family
2. To identify specific problems Freddy has with his brother Mike and his sister Ellen
3. To understand why having a special role in the school play is so important to Freddy
4. To identify the talents Freddy shows at his audition that land him the role as the Green Kangaroo
5. To recognize what effect Freddy's announcement about being in the play has on other members of his family as well as himself
6. To recognize Freddy's feelings before, during, and immediately after his stage performance
7. To understand the ways in which being the Green Kangaroo in the school play helps Freddy
8. To identify the forms of support Freddy gets from adults in the course of the story

The Importance of Setting

The action takes place at the Dissels' home and at Freddy and Mike's school. The family lives in a pleasant home, with a bedroom for Ellen (which used to be Freddy's), a room for Mike and Freddy to share (an arrangement Freddy is unhappy about), and a bedroom for the parents. There is room for the three kids to play all at once (but not with each other) in a living room or family room, and there is a kitchen or dining room where the family gathers around a table for supper (where Freddy makes his startling announcement that he is going to be in the school play for students Mike's age).

At school, Freddy sees the announcement about the school play on a hallway bulletin board; he tries out for the play onstage in the auditorium while Ms. Matson

sits away from the stage in a seat for the audience. For the play, Freddy walks from his second-grade classroom along a hallway to Ms. Matson's room, where he gets into his Green Kangaroo costume and admires himself in a large mirror. Backstage in the auditorium, waiting to go on, Freddy gets a bout of stage fright, but when he steps out onto the stage alone in the spotlight, he regains his confidence. The play is staged with bright, colorful costumes and sets, and Freddy gets another moment in the spotlight when he takes a solo bow to enthusiastic support.

Cross-Curricular Sources

BOOKS ABOUT JUDY BLUME

Betsy Lee, *Judy Blume's Story*
 Leonard S. Marcus, *Author Talk: Conversations with Judy Blume...*
 Maryann N. Weidt, *Presenting Judy Blume*

BOOKS ABOUT KANGAROOS

(fiction)

Margaret Wise Brown, *Young Kangaroo*
 Emma Chichester Clark, *I Love You, Blue Kangaroo*
 Joanna Cole, *Norma Jean, Jumping Bean*
 Jack Kent, *Joey*
 (nonfiction)
 Caroline Arnold, *Kangaroo*
 Beth Wagner Brust, *Kangaroos (Zoobooks)*
 Bill Ivy, *Kangaroos*
 Hope Ryden, *Joey: The Story of a Baby Kangaroo*

BOOKS ABOUT SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

(fiction)

C.S. Adler, *The Lump in the Middle*
 Judy Blume, *The Pain and the Great One* and the Fudge series
 Eve Bunting, *Twinnies*
 Judith Caseley, *Starring Dorothy Kane*
 Judith R. Enderle and Stephanie G. Tessler, *What's the Matter Kelly Beans?*
 Joanna Hurwitz, *"E" Is for Elisa*
 Jean Little, *Revenge of the Small Small*
 Maryann MacDonald, *No Room for Francie*
 Susan Paton, *Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe*
 Patricia Polacco, *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*
 Bonnie Pryor, *Vinegar Pancakes and Vanishing Cream*
 Carol Purdy, *Least of All*
 Jeanne Titherington, *A Place for Ben*
 Judith Viorst, *I'll Fix Anthony*

(nonfiction)

Elaine Landau, *Sibling Rivalry: Brothers and Sisters at Odds*

BOOKS ABOUT SELF-ESTEEM AND IDENTITY

Patricia Reilly Giff, *Poopsie Pomerantz, Pick Up Your Feet and Starring Rosie*
 Marlo Thomas, *Free to Be... You and Me*

CD-ROM

Amazing Animals: CD-ROM Activity Pack (Dorling Kindersley Multimedia)
Blue Reading Time Activities and Blue Treasure Hunt (Humongus Entertainment)
Jumpstart Artist (Knowledge Adventure)
Reading Blaster: Ages 4-6 and Reading Blaster: Ages 5-7 (Knowledge Adventure)

INTERNET

"Judy Blume Teacher Resource File,

VIDEO

Animal Magic with Fran
Australia's Kangaroos (National Geographic)
Beast Feast (Spoken Arts)
That's a Family (Respect for All Series) (Women's Educational Media)

Themes and Motifs

In discussing the book, help students understand that the story deals with these main issues and situations.

Themes

- . middle-child feelings
- . family relationships
- . sibling rivalry
- . being glad to be yourself
- . building self-esteem
- . doing a special thing and receiving recognition for it
- . adult understanding and support

Motifs

- . green kangaroo
- . school play
- . jumping

- . shared bedroom
- . hand-me-down clothes
- . "break a leg"

Meaning Study

Discuss with students the meaning of the boldfaced words from the story in the following sentences.

- 1 . She even goes to nursery school, Freddy thought.
(Nursery school is a pre-kindergarten program for children three and four years old, who usually spend half a day at the school. Staff members are trained in early childhood education and child development. They focus on creative and cooperative activities.)
2. Then one day Freddy heard about the school play.
(A play is a story that is written to be acted out on stage. Most schools put on several plays each year featuring students of various grades. Freddy wants a role in the school play so he can do something special, something neither Mike nor Ellen has ever done.)
3. Ms. Matson needed someone to play a special part
(A part, in this context, is a character or role in a play, movie, or other form of entertainment. When a person acts a part, we say he or she plays the part. Ms. Matson is looking for someone to act the special role of the Green Kangaroo in the school play.)
4. "Go to the auditorium this afternoon."
(An auditorium is a large room in a school, theater or other building where a group of people can gather. People may gather in a school auditorium to take part in a meeting or assembly, or to be part of an audience that watches a performance.)
5. Freddy had never been on a stage.
(A stage is the raised platform in a theater on which actors perform. Freddy tries out for the school play while standing on the stage, which seems so big, it makes him feel small. Ms. Matson has Freddy try out on the stage so she can be sure the audience will be able to hear him when he delivers his lines, and also to be sure Freddy will be a lively kangaroo and jump all around the stage.)
6. "I'm going to be the Green Kangaroo!"
(A kangaroo is an Australian animal—a marsupial—with small front legs and very strong back legs

that it uses for leaping. A kangaroo uses its long, powerful tail for balance. Real kangaroos are brownish or grayish or reddish, not green like Freddy's kangaroo costume.)

7. Freddy waited backstage.
(This is the area behind the curtain in a theater on the stage or in the wings adjacent to the stage or in the dressing rooms. Freddy begins to feel nervous while he is waiting backstage for the play to begin.)
8. Freddy looked out into the audience.
(An audience is a group of people gathered to hear or see something. Freddy's parents, siblings, classmates, neighbors, and teachers are all out there in the middle of the audience. But Freddy is up on the stage all by himself not in the middle. He has the opening lines and part in the play, welcoming the audience to the performance.)

Comprehension Questions

Discuss the following questions with your students. You could ask students in higher grades to write their answers to the questions in their own words.

1. Look at the pictures in the book, without reading the story. Write or tell a few sentences about one or more of the pictures. Describe 1) what the person or people in the picture is/are feeling or doing at that moment and 2) what is happening in the picture and 3) what is important in this particular picture. As you read or listen to the story, see if what you wrote or told about the picture(s) was accurate.
2. What problems does Freddy have with his brother Mike?
(Mike gets new clothes each year as he grows out of his old ones, but Freddy then has to wear Mike's hand-me-down clothes instead of getting new clothes of his own. Freddy now has to share a room with Mike; their parents call it "the boys' room," but Freddy knows it is still really Mike's room. Mike and his friends tell Freddy, "Get out of the way, kid," when Freddy wants to join their sports games.)
3. What problems does Freddy have with his sister Ellen?
(Freddy's parents have decided that Ellen, as the only girl in the family, needs her own bedroom, so

Freddy has had to give his room to Ellen and move in with Mike. Little Ellen doesn't know how to play on a second-grader c level, so Freddy gets mad at her for messing up his things. When he pinches her in frustration, she screams, and Mom tells Freddy he should not ever be mean to his "baby" sister. She 's in nursery school, Freddy thinks—some baby/—meaning that he doesn't think Ellen is any kind of a baby any more.)

4. After Freddy moves in with Mike, Mom and Dad say, "It's the boys' room." But Freddy thinks, He knew better! What does this comment mean?
(Mom and Dad may call the shared bedroom "the boys' room, " but Freddy is quite sure that Mike still considers it his own room. As a result, Freddy can 't think of the shared room as partly his either)
5. Why does Freddy want so much to be in the school play?
(He sees a chance at last to do one special thing, something neither Mike nor Ellen has ever done. He can shine in a unique, individual role, something he has felt he cannot do at home in his role as the middle child of his family.)
6. Ms. Gumber tells Freddy that the school play is only for the fifth and sixth graders—"The big boys and girls, like Mike." Freddy replies in a mumble, "That figures!" What does Ms. Gumber understand about Freddy from this comment?
(She realizes that Freddy resents all the things that Mike can do because Mike is older She understands that having a special part in the play would boost Freddy's self-esteem and give this middle child a chance to shine.)
7. Why does Freddy get the part in the school play?
(When he tries out, he speaks in a big stage voice that carries all over the auditorium, so Ms. Matson knows the audience will hear his lines. And he is a great jumper doing big jumps and little jumps all over the stage. Probably a small, bouncy second-grader would be better at this jumping than an older larger fifth or sixth grader)
8. What do the pictures show about the children's reactions at the dinner table just after Freddy announces that he is going to be the Green Kangaroo in the play?
(Freddy is complacently happy that he has at last upstaged Mike, as we can see by his sideways smile

in Mike 's direction and then his self-contained satisfied smile in the next picture. Mike is so shocked at his little brother's achievement that he chokes over his plate and knocks over his glass of milk. When he recovers from these mishaps, he shows he is grumpy and displeased, sinking his head into his hands, frowning, and looking up and away from Freddy. Ellen reacts with glee to Mike reaction and uses it as a chance to scream in a loud voice.)

9. In the weeks before the play, how does Freddy get ready for his part?
(He practices at school on the stage. He practices at home with kangaroo faces, kangaroo jumps, and kangaroo dreams.)
10. How does Freddy feel about actually getting out on stage and saying his lines on the day of the play?
(We can see from the illustrations that Freddy likes being in his Green Kangaroo costume and getting his green freckles. But when it is time for the play to begin, Freddy gets nervous—his heart beats faster his stomach bounces, he feels funny. But then he gets ahold of himself realizing as he stands on stage alone that he has a job to do, welcoming the audience and getting the play started. Now he feels better; he smiles more widely; he feels good. He delivers his opening lines with enthusiasm, as we can see from the picture and the upper-case letters.)
11. What exactly is Freddy's role as the Green Kangaroo?
(He is the first actor on stage and greets the audience to be- gin the play. From then on, he simply jumps all around the stage and delivers the line "Me ? I am the Green Kangaroo!" every few minutes in answer to the other actors ' repeated question, "And who are you?")
12. How does being the Green Kangaroo in the school play help Freddy?
(At last he has had a special, individual, much-admired role to play, completely apart from his brother or his sister The afterglow of this moment of unique glory makes Freddy much happier about himself He realizes he is someone special and unique, so he is no longer very resentful about his middle- child status in the family. He feels "just great being Freddy Dissel. ")
13. What support does Freddy get from adults in the course of this story?

(Ms. Gumber, Freddy's second-grade teacher, realizes that Freddy could use the ego boost that being in the older students' play would provide. Ms. Matson is happy to give Freddy the special part of the Green Kangaroo, after she checks to be sure he will play the part well. She also takes Freddy out on the stage after the performance for a special round of applause just for him. Freddy's parents congratulate him on getting the part and encourage him on the day of the play. Ms. Gumber and Freddy's parents also attend the play.)

14. What activities do Mike, Ellen, and Freddy enjoy? *(The illustrations reveal this. Mike likes to read books/study and play ball games. Ellen likes to color/draw and play with her dollhouse and her blocks. Freddy enjoys playing with his toy vehicles, would like to play ball games, and of course loves being on stage.)*

Across the Curriculum

Art and Drama

1. Design a stage set for a scene in a "Green Kangaroo" play.
2. Make a Green Kangaroo costume, or another animal costume. With classmates, use these costumes in a play featuring animal characters.
3. If possible, compare the artwork for all three editions of Green Kangaroo: the original in 1969, the first revision in 1981, and this edition of 1991. Do you think all versions are equally effective? If not, why do you find one more effective or fitting than another?

History and Social Studies

1. Find out what useful and helpful things you could do with your outgrown clothes in your community.
2. Freddy's school includes kindergarten through sixth grade. Report on how the grades from kindergarten through twelfth grade are split up among the schools in your community and surrounding communities.
3. Ellen goes to nursery school. Explain the different features of these types of child care: kindergarten, nursery school, play group, day-care center, family day care, preschool.

Language Arts

1. Read or listen to other tales of sibling rivalry by Judy Blume, such as The Pain and the Great One and the Fudge series, and by other authors. What common elements do you notice in the stories and illustrations? What differences do you notice?
2. As a middle child, Freddy feels "like the peanut butter part of a sandwich." Using the word like or as to compare things that aren't really alike is a figure of speech called a simile. Make up some "like" or "as" similes of your own, comparing yourself—how you look, how you feel, your place in your family—with other things.
3. At the end of the play, Freddy takes a "big, low bow"—he bends forward. What other meanings and pronunciations does the word bow have?
4. In the book, Ellen screams, Mom yells, Freddy mumbles and hollers. With classmates, make a list of other words for the ways in which people speak.
5. When Freddy speaks to the audience at the beginning of the play, his words are printed in capital letters: "HELLO EVERYONE. I AM THE GREEN KANGAROO. WELCOME." What does this tell you about the way Freddy speaks these words?
6. "Don't cry over spilled milk" is an old saying. What do you think it means? With classmates, think of any other old sayings you have heard, and tell what they mean.

Mathematics

1. Find examples of these shapes in the book's illustrations: square, rectangle, circle, oval, cube, sphere, cylinder, star, crescent, arch, triangle.
2. How many people are in Freddy's family? how many adults? how many children?
3. How many different roles in the school play do the illustrations show?

Science

1. With classmates, research and report on kangaroos. Be sure to include visuals in your report, plus an explanation of why kangaroos are such good jumpers.
2. With classmates, make a list of other creatures known for their jumping ability. Then research and report on one of these.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Freddy is nervous about going on stage to begin the school play. His heart beats fast and his stomach

- flutters. Describe a time when you felt nervous about doing something, especially something public. How did this work out for you?
2. Share with classmates the things that annoy you about living and getting along with your siblings, or things you've noticed about friends and their siblings. Do you find many common problems? Brainstorm ways to reduce problems among siblings.
 3. Attend a stage performance put on by children, like Freddy's school play.
 4. Freddy is usually a nickname for Fred or Frederick. Mike is usually a nickname for Michael. Compare names and nicknames with classmates. How many of you are known by nicknames, and how many are known by their full names?
 5. With a classmate, role-play Freddy and Ellen trying to play together.
 6. Explore your school's stage and backstage areas. What props and costumes are on hand? What lighting is available? How large or small or permanent is the stage area?
 7. With classmates, write and perform a stage play featuring the characters in Freddy's school play that you see in the book's illustrations.

Alternate Assessment

Depending on student ability level, you could have students write their responses to one of these assessment vehicles or simply discuss their response with you, individually or in a group setting.

1. Explain what the color pictures add to this story, or how the pictures fill out the story's words.
2. Compare the opening and closing illustrations of Freddy, Ellen, and Mike. What changes in their sibling relationships do these pictures show? How and why did this change happen?
3. Describe the Dissel family and the family members' relationships with each other.

Vocabulary Test

Read each sentence. Below the sentence, find the answer that could be used in place of the word in boldface (dark) type. Write the letter of the answer in the blank in front of the sentence.

- 1 . Freddy thought a lot about being the one in the middle.
(a) on the outside
(b) on the inside
(c) halfway between two things or sides
_____ 2. This was Freddy's chance to do something special.
(a) different in a good way
(b) difficult in a harmful way
(c) scary
3. Freddy looked at the floor and mumbled.
(a) shouted.
(b) hummed.
(c) spoke low and not clearly
_____ 4. "Great!" Freddy hollered.
(a) whispered
(b) yelled
(c) jumped up and down
_____ 5. "It's a very important part."
(a) full of value or meaning
(b) boring
(c) without meaning
_____ 6. The next two weeks were busy ones for Freddy.
(a) dull
(b) angry
(c) full of activity
_____ 7. Some of their neighbors would be coming to the play, too.
(a) people who live near you
(b) people who are related to you
(c) people who live across town from you
_____ 8. The girls in the sixth grade had made Freddy's costume.
(a) everyday school clothes
(b) clothes that make you look like someone else
(c) face make-up for a play

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| _____ 1. Boy who is in fifth or sixth grade. | a. Ms. Matson |
| _____ 2. Teacher who tells Freddy to "break a leg." | b. Mike |
| _____ 3. Youngest member of the Dissel family. | c. Freddy |
| _____ 4. Teacher who gives Freddy a part in the school play. | d. Ms. Gumber |
| _____ 5. Red-headed second-grader. | e. Ellen |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. The person who wrote this book is
 (a) Eric Carle. (b) Irene Trivas. (c) Judy Blume.
- _____ 2. In the play, Freddy plays the part of a
 (a) Green Kangaroo. (b) White Cat. (c) Yellow Bird.
- _____ 3. The oldest child in Freddy's family is
 (a) Freddy. (b) Mike. (c) Ellen.
- _____ 4. The school play is being done by students in these grades:
 (a) first and second. (b) third and fourth. (c) fifth and sixth.
- _____ 5. One reason Freddy gets the part in the play is because he is good at
 (a) singing. (b) jumping. (c) standing on his head.
- _____ 6. At the beginning of the play, Freddy greets
 (a) the audience. (b) no one. (c) the other actors.
- _____ 7. Freddy gets most of his clothes from
 (a) his father. (b) the local store. (c) his brother.
- _____ 8. Freddy tries out for the play in the school
 (a) auditorium. (b) cafeteria. (c) gym.
- _____ 9. As part of his costume, Freddy gets
 (a) a long red robe. (b) green spots on his face. (c) a star on his head.
- _____ 10. Freddy especially likes to play with
 (a) video games. (b) toy cars and trucks. (c) building blocks.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with a T if it is true or an F if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. Freddy does not like being the middle child in his family.
- _____ 2. Ellen does not go to school yet.
- _____ 3. Freddy has to share a room with Ellen.
- _____ 4. There are three children in Freddy's family.
- _____ 5. Ellen spills a glass of milk when Freddy announces that he's going to be in the school play.
- _____ 6. Mike is not pleased that Freddy got the part in the play.
- _____ 7. Freddy is calm, and not at all nervous, when it is time for him to go onstage.
- _____ 8. In the play, Freddy hops all around and also speaks some lines.
- _____ 9. At the end of the play, Freddy takes a big, low bow all by himself.
- _____ 10. Freddy is a great success as the Green Kangaroo.

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

1. Why does Freddy want to be in the school play? How does his part in the play make him feel?
2. How do Freddy's teachers help him? How do his parents help him?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| _____ 1. Curly-haired child who goes to nursery school. | a. Ms. Matson |
| _____ 2. Person who plays a part in the school play. | b. Ms. Gumber |
| _____ 3. Teacher who is in charge of the school play | c. Freddy |
| _____ 4. Family member who spills a glass of milk | d. Ellen |
| _____ 5. Second-grade teacher | e. Mike |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- _____ 1. Freddy's last name is
 (a) Blume. (b) Dissel. (c) Smith.
- _____ 2. The "one in the middle" is
 (a) Freddy. (b) Ellen. (c) Mike.
- _____ 3. Freddy and his mother both have
 (a) blonde hair. (b) brown hair. (c) red hair.
- _____ 4. The youngest child in Freddy's family is
 (a) Freddy. (b) Ellen. (c) Mike.
- _____ 5. One reason Freddy gets the part in the play is because he has a
 (a) very loud voice. (b) pet kangaroo. (c) good singing voice.
- _____ 6. The Green Kangaroo costume covers all of Freddy except his
 (a) hands. (b) feet. (c) face.
- _____ 7. Freddy shares a room with
 (a) his sister. (b) his brother. (c) his parents.
- _____ 8. When Freddy tries out for the play, he stands on
 (a) a desk. (b) the stage. (c) a stepladder.
- _____ 9. Freddy tells his family the news about his part in the play
 (a) at dinner. (b) while watching TV. (c) on the day of the play.
- _____ 10. Freddy's line in the play is
 (a) "See me jump!" (b) "Thank you!" (c) "I am the Green Kangaroo!"

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each sentence with a T if it is true or an F if any part of it is false.

- _____ 1. The author of this book also created the book's pictures.
- _____ 2. Freddy has problems when he tries to play with either Mike or Ellen.
- _____ 3. As soon as he hears about the play, Freddy wants to be in it.
- _____ 4. At first, Freddy's parents don't want Freddy to be in the play.
- _____ 5. Freddy is the only second-grader in the school play.
- _____ 6. Mike also has a part in the school play.
- _____ 7. Freddy spends a lot of time practicing for his part in the play.
- _____ 8. In the play, Freddy jumps around a lot but doesn't say any words.
- _____ 9. There are two Green Kangaroos in the play.
- _____ 10. When he goes out on stage, Freddy forgets what he is supposed to do.

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

1. Why do you think a second-grader might be better as the Green Kangaroo than a fifth- or sixth-grader?
2. What problems does Freddy have with his brother Mike? with his sister Ellen?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. c | 5. a |
| 2. a | 6. c |
| 3. c | 7. a |
| 4. b | 8. b |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. b | 4. a |
| 2. d | 5. c |
| 3. e | |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. a |
| 2. a | 7. c |
| 3. b | 8. a |
| 4. c | 9. b |
| 5. b | 10. b |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part IV

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (10 points)

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. d | 4. e |
| 2. c | 5. b |
| 3. a | |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

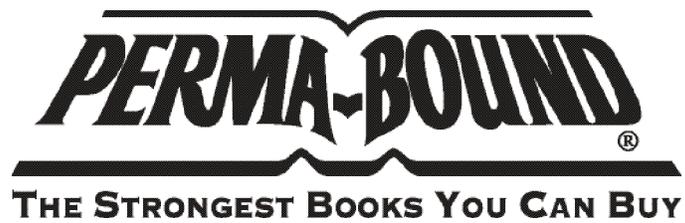
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. c |
| 2. a | 7. b |
| 3. c | 8. b |
| 4. b | 9. a |
| 5. a | 10. c |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. F | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.



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