

Peter's Chair

by Ezra Jack Keats

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Regina Abernathy

A Perma-Bound Production

Notes to the Teacher

1. It would enhance the reading of this story if a small unit on feelings was taught prior to the reading.
 - A) fear
 - B) jealousy
 - C) anger
 - D) joy
2. Also a unit on sharing and cooperative work could be introduced to the students.

Synopsis

Peter's Chair is a classic tale of sibling rivalry. Peter, an only child, believes his place in the family is being usurped by his newborn sister. These unpleasant feelings first arise when Peter is asked to play quietly because he might wake the baby. Then, he notices that his parents have painted his cradle, his high chair, and his crib pink. It is at this time that he becomes aware "his" belongings are being given to his new baby sister.

Peter notices that his parents have not yet painted his blue chair. Therefore, in an effort to save his last possession, Peter decides to run away and take his blue chair, a toy, his baby picture, and his dog.

Peter does not run far. Instead, he runs outside in front of his house. There, he decides to sit in his chair. Then, Peter discovers that he can no longer fit in the chair. He has grown too large!

His mother discovers his attempt to run away and begins to sweetly persuade Peter to return home. Soon, Peter decides to come inside, but does so by playing a game of hide and seek with his mother. During the game, when his mother can not find him, Peter happily proclaims his presence.

Afterward, during lunch, Peter sits in a grown-up chair next to his father. Finally, Peter realizes he has outgrown his blue chair and decides to help paint his chair for his sister.

Biographical Sketch

Ezra Jack Keats (1916-1983), an internationally renowned, award-winning illustrator and author of books for children, was a native of Brooklyn, New York. He illustrated thirty-three books, twenty of which he authored.

In *The Snowy Day*, the winner of a Caldecott Medal, Keats introduced his innovative technique, the blending of painting and collages using vivid colors. The book was also innovative in its treatment of the main character, an African American boy named Peter. The book introduced an era when authors and illustrators began to explore the universal experiences of African American children. Also, the environment in which the children lived was depicted as natural. The animated film version of the book by Weston Woods received the Venice Film Award.

Keats continued by writing additional books about Peter, including *Whistle for Willie*, *A Letter to Amy*, *Peter's Chair* and *Goggles*. Keats has won numerous awards for both his illustrations and contributions as a children's author. His books have been translated into sixteen languages.

Critic's Corner

Peter's Chair is a warm and gentle story of a child resisting change in an attempt to hold onto his childhood. The wonderful illustrations and descriptive text allow every child to view life through the experience of the main character, Peter. Excellent for pre-schoolers through third grade.

Objectives

1. To understand the motivations of the main characters
2. To connect the experience of the main character to personal experience
3. To comprehend that family life sometimes changes
4. To comprehend that with time, the body grows
5. To comprehend that new experiences can generate fear, but that fear can be overcome
6. To comprehend that giving and sharing can be a wonderful experience

Student Activities

1. Children who can read could read the story on cassette tape. This will allow beginning readers not only to hear themselves reading, but to learn to read with expression. Also, students can begin collecting an audio library of good books.

2. Students could draw their interpretation of the book and explain their drawings to their classmates.
3. Have students retell the story in small groups.
4. Have students retell the story to their parents.
5. Have students re-enact the story of Peter's chair as the teacher reads the story.
6. Have students write a story of their experience accepting a younger brother, sister or relative.

Beyond the Story

Peter's Chair appeals to all growing children. Here are some ways to bring it "home."

Math

Measure each child, or have each child's height measured. Place the child's name next to his height on the wall and at the end of the year, or

at a given interval of time, have each child measured again to note if he or she has grown taller. This would be a good time to teach the use of a ruler and/or yard stick, as well as measurements (inches, yards, and feet).

Emotions and Sharing

Have children go home, and with parental permission, find a toy they have outgrown to give to a younger child. Toys can be donated to -

- A) Toys for Tots
- B) Battered women's shelter
- C) A needy day care center
- D) The centers for the homeless
- E) Any other charity

Bibliography

ed. Commire, Anne. *Something About the Author: Facts and Pictures About Writers and Illustrators of Books for Young People*, Vol. 34.

PETER'S CHAIR TEST

Vocabulary

Read each sentence from the story. Then choose the best meaning for the underlined words.

1. Remember, we have a new baby in the house.
 - A. think about
 - B. whisper
 - C. far away
2. His mother was fussing around the cradle.
 - A. seat
 - B. large bed
 - C. small bed for a baby
3. He saw his crib and muttered.
 - A. screamed
 - B. grumbled
 - C. cried
4. He arranged his things very nicely.
 - A. put things neatly
 - B. threw
 - C. stacked
5. Peter decided to sit in his chair.
 - A. thought about
 - B. made up his mind
 - C. forgot

Comprehension

1. What was Peter doing when the story began?
 - A. sleeping
 - B. playing in front of his house
 - C. making a building out of his toys
2. Why did Peter's mother ask him to play quietly?
 - A. His father was asleep.
 - B. She did not want him to wake the baby.
 - C. She could not hear the T.V.
3. What color had Peter's mother painted his cradle?
 - A. blue
 - B. yellow
 - C. pink
4. Which one of Peter's belongings had his father painted?
 - A. his high chair
 - B. his truck
 - C. his dresser
5. One of Peter's belongings had not been painted. What was it?
 - A. his cradle
 - B. his high chair
 - C. his blue chair
6. What did Peter decide to do?
 - A. cry
 - B. run away
 - C. talk to his mother
7. When Peter sat in his blue chair, what did he discover?
 - A. He could not fit into the chair.
 - B. The chair was too large for him.
 - C. The chair was broken.
8. Why did Peter's mother want him to come inside the house?
 - A. to take a nap
 - B. to have a very special lunch
 - C. to help her with the new baby
9. At the end of the story, what did Peter ask his dad to help him do?
 - A. paint the chair for his new sister
 - B. read a new book
 - C. clear the dishes from the table

PETER'S CHAIR ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary

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

Comprehension

1. C 3. C 5. C 7. A 9. A
2. B 4. A 6. B 8. B



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