

Sam, Bangs & Moonshine

by Evaline Ness

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Kathleen Greenholdt

A Perma-Bound Production

Synopsis

Young Samantha, known to everyone as "Sam," lives on an island with her fisherman father and a wise cat named Bangs.

Spending most of her time alone with Bangs, Sam invents fantastic stories to make her life more fun. She tells people that her dead mother is really a mermaid and that an old rug in the doorway is a chariot. Sam tells so many stories that no one believes anything she says - no one, that is, except her playmate Thomas, a wealthier boy who thinks Sam has a baby kangaroo.

Each day, when Thomas comes to visit, Sam gives him a new excuse for why the baby kangaroo is not at home. But, one day she sends Thomas to find the imaginary animal near a treacherous point called Blue Rock. Bangs follows Thomas, and Sam begins to worry. The tide should rise early that day and cover the road to Blue Rock.

A formidable storm descends upon the island, and Sam's father returns home. Frantic, Sam sends him to search for her two friends. He finds Thomas, but says that Bangs has been washed away.

When Sam goes to bed that night, her father tells her to think about the difference between *real* and *moonshine*. He had said this to her once before, but now she understands. While Sam is thinking about the lesson of the day, Bangs comes home.

The following morning, the fisherman gives Sam a present. She thinks that it is a baby kangaroo, but it is really a gerbil. Sam decides to give the gerbil to Thomas, who is sick in bed. When Thomas asks what the gerbil is called, Sam says *Moonshine*.

Biographical Sketch

Evaline Ness, a former resident of New York City, was born in Pontiac, Michigan. Primarily an artist by profession, she developed her creative skills at the Chicago Art Institute, the Art Students' League and the Italian Accademia de Belle Arti. Her successful illustrations have appeared in children's books and in national magazines.

Also a writer, Ms. Ness completed many storybooks for children. *Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog* was named an American Literature Association Notable Book in 1972. Other books to Ms. Ness' credit include *Amelia Mixed the Mustard and Other Poems* (1975) and *The Scribner's Anthology for Young People* (1976).

Ms. Ness died August 12, 1986, having published her last book, *Fierce the Lion*, in 1980. She wrote sixteen children's books in her lifetime.

Critic's Corner

Sam, Bangs & Moonshine, published in 1966, won that year's Caldecott Medal. The award is presented annually for the most distinguished picture book for children. Because Ms. Ness was both writer and illustrator of this book, the medal is a double honor.

General Objectives

1. To understand the importance of telling the truth
2. To explore the natural and man-made elements of the island setting
3. To learn the value of friendship

Specific Objectives

1. To understand Sam's reasons for lying
2. To explore Sam's character transformation

Discussion Questions

Literal:

1. What are some things that Sam does while her father is at work?
(She does her chores - making the beds, washing the dishes and sweeping the floors. She also talks to Bangs, daydreams and lies to Thomas.)
2. What things does Thomas have that Sam does not?
(He has a bicycle with a basket, a big house, many farm animals and a jungle gym.)
3. Describe the geography of the island.
(The island, near a large harbor, has hills, big rocks, beaches, trees and caves.)
4. What man-made structures are on the island?
(There is a windmill, a barn and houses. There are also ships and a lighthouse in the harbor.)

Interpretive:

1. Do you think Bangs really talks to Sam?
(Ask students to find passages in the book that support their views.)
2. Is Sam lonely on the island?
(This question is asked to help students understand some of Sam's motivations for lying. She wishes she had a mother, and her father is gone all day. She also talks to her cat.)

3. Why did Sam name the gerbil *Moonshine*?
(*The gerbil looks like a baby kangaroo, a figment of Sam's imagination. Also, the name will remind her of the lesson she has learned.*)
4. What roles do things in nature play in this story?
(*Sam knows that Thomas is coming to visit when the sun makes a golden star on the cracked window. The tide, caused by the sun and the moon, ruins Sam's moonshine fun. Sam's cat yawns when Sam lies, licks her hand when she stops lying, and follows Thomas to Blue Rock, which makes Sam worry. The gerbil, which was real, becomes Moonshine in the end.*)

Critical:

1. Why does Sam's father say that there is good *moonshine* and bad *moonshine*?
(*It is important to separate imagination from reality. Bad moonshine means lies. Good moonshine means make believe.*)
2. Why do you think Sam tells Thomas that she has a baby kangaroo?
(*Thomas has toys, animals, a big house and probably a mother. Sam wishes she had those things. She wants Thomas to think that she has one thing he does not have.*)
3. Why does Sam give the gerbil to Thomas?
(*Sam is sorry for her moonshine mischief. Thomas lost his health and his bicycle in the storm, and Sam wants to make amends. She also sees that friendship is measured by actions, not possessions. She no longer needs to lie, because she is grateful for Thomas' friendship.*)
4. Why is it necessary for Bangs to get lost in the tide?
(*Only when Sam thinks that Bangs has been washed away does she see the trouble that moonshine causes. She learns that she should be appreciative of the love and friendship she has. These things are more important than moonshine.*)

Creative:

1. How do you think Sam will show people that she no longer tells lies?
(*This question is asked to help students understand the importance of being trustworthy and the difficulty of gaining trust back once it is lost.*)

Student Activities

1. Ask students to write short *Moonshine* tales told from the point of view of the wise cat Bangs.
2. On a map or globe, help students locate large and small islands around the world. Ask each student to select one island and write a report about it. Topics that might be discussed are the island's natural resources, industries, government and cultural traditions.
3. Ask each student to find an object at home that resembles something that might be present on or near an island (examples: ship model, starfish, shell, sailor hat). Have the student draw or paint a picture of the object and write a short story that involves the item in an island setting.
4. Ask students to try their hands at creating funny comic strips called *Moonshine Adventures*. The central character might be a mermaid, a fierce lion or a baby kangaroo.

VOCABULARY TEST

Matching (20 points)

For each underlined word, find a definition from the list on the right. Write the letter of the definition in the correct space.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| ___ 1. Sam had a <u>reckless</u> habit of lying. | A. threatening |
| ___ 2. The ships carried curious <u>cargoes</u> , from giraffes to gerbils. | B. loads |
| ___ 3. As he watched the <u>diminishing</u> Thomas, Bangs warned Sam about the tide. | C. graceful |
| ___ 4. Sam was so busy thinking that she was <u>unaware</u> of the coming storm. | D. becoming smaller |
| ___ 5. Sam did not hear the <u>menacing</u> rumble of thunder approaching. | E. unknowing |
| ___ 6. A sudden gust of wind drove <u>torrents</u> of rain against Sam's face. | F. soaked |
| ___ 7. During the storm, the <u>murky</u> light in the room deepened to black. | G. careless |
| ___ 8. Sitting up in bed, Sam stared at the black <u>oblong</u> in the window. | H. showers |
| ___ 9. When he returned home after the storm, Bangs' coat was a <u>sodden</u> mess. | I. long shape |
| ___ 10. Hopping toward Sam was a small, <u>elegant</u> gerbil. | J. dark |

Fill in the Blank (10 points)

Write the correct word missing from each sentence.

1. Perhaps the baby kangaroo has gone to grind corn in the _____ .
2. The _____ tower warns ships at sea.
3. When the _____ comes up, it covers the road to Blue Rock.
4. The ragged old rug is Sam's _____ drawn by dragons.
5. There are ships in the large _____ near Sam's island.

COMPREHENSION TEST

True or False (30 points)

Decide if each statement is true or false, and mark T or F in the blank.

- ___ 1. Thomas is not wealthy.
- ___ 2. Bangs is a wise cat.
- ___ 3. Sam gives Thomas a gerbil because she is sorry.
- ___ 4. Sam's mother lives in a cave.
- ___ 5. A fisherman finds Thomas on the rock.
- ___ 6. Thomas comes to visit when the moon makes a star on the window.
- ___ 7. Thomas trusts Sam.
- ___ 8. Sam and her father live in a grand house on the hill.
- ___ 9. Sam's chariot is good *moonshine*.
- ___10. Sam tells lies to replace things she does not have.
- ___11. The gerbil looks like a baby kangaroo.
- ___12. Thomas loses his bicycle and his voice in the storm.
- ___13. Sam's father is a sailor.
- ___14. Farmers live near Sam.
- ___15. The story takes place on the coast of a large continent.

Short Answer (10 points)

Complete each of the following sentences with a word or phrase.

- 1. Sam sends Thomas to a cave behind _____ to find the baby kangaroo.
- 2. The opposite of *moonshine* is _____ .
- 3. Sam's mother is _____ .
- 4. It is important to know the difference between good and bad _____ .
- 5. Sam is a nickname for _____ .

SAM, BANGS & MOONSHINE ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

Matching (20 points)

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

Fill in the Blank (10 points)

1. windmill
2. lighthouse
3. tide
4. chariot
5. harbor

COMPREHENSION TEST

True or False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F | 11. T |
| 2. T | 7. T | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. F | 13. F |
| 4. F | 9. T | 14. T |
| 5. T | 10. T | 15. F |

Short Answer (10 points)

1. Blue Rock
2. *real*
3. dead
4. *moonshine*
5. Samantha

Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

TEACHER'S NOTES



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

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