

The Snowy Day

by Ezra Jack Keats

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Regina Abernathy

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Note to the Teacher

A lesson on using one's imagination might be taught prior to reading the story. The game of "Let's Pretend" is good.

Synopsis

Peter, the main character, awakens to a wonderful winter day. Snow has blanketed the outdoors and Peter cannot wait to explore the fresh new snow. Once outside, he is enthused as his feet sink into the snow. Therefore, he purposely points his toes out as he walks, notices his footprints, then points his toes in to create a different impression in the snow. Later he finds a stick and makes tracks in the snow. His stick is used again to smack a tree and force the snow off a branch. The snow, however, falls on Peter's head. Peter later engages in a snowball fight with older boys. He decides to quit this endeavor because he is overpowered. He then busies himself by making a smiling snowman as well as snow angels.

Finally he imagines himself as a mountain climber as he scales a heaping mountain of snow. Then he slides to the bottom. In an attempt to prolong his joyful day, Peter makes a snowball and places it in his pocket. Finally he goes into his house. His mother helps Peter prepare for a warm bath, and Peter discusses his snow adventures with her. While in the bath, Peter's thoughts are about his wonderful day. Before going to bed, he searches his pockets for the snowball. It was not there. This saddens Peter. During the night Peter dreams that the snow has melted. However, upon awakening, he finds the snow is still there and additional snow is falling. After breakfast, he invites his friend to come and share adventures in the snow.

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

The Snowy Day, a Caldecott Award Book, is a delightful story which captures the adventures of all young children. It was the first book written and illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats. The book is timeless as it captures the joy of childhood.

Objectives

1. To connect the story with personal experiences
2. To understand that joy can be found exploring nature
3. To understand that using the imagination is fun

Student Activities

1. Have students retell the story to a small group.
2. Have students retell the story to a parent.
3. Have students re-enact the story as the teacher reads the story.
4. Have students draw pictures of their experiences in the snow.
5. Have students write of their experiences in the snow.
6. Have students write *The Snowy Day, Part II*. What adventures did Peter and his friend have in the snow?
7. Have students draw *The Snowy Day, Part II: The New Adventures of Peter and His Friend*.

Beyond the Story

Science

- A. Students may define snow and determine what causes snow.
- B. Have a lesson on changing a solid to a liquid. Place a snowball in a dish. How long does it take to melt at room temperature? How long does it take to melt under a heat source? Compare the amount of time.

- C. Students may draw and cut out snow flakes.
- D. Students may draw and cut out a pattern of their shoe using cardboard. (Lesson on footprints in snow, or mud, etc.) Place footprints on floor, wall, under desk. Students may use these cardboard footprints to create designs of their original print by dipping them in paint or coloring.

Bibliography

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

THE SNOWY DAY TEST

Vocabulary

Read each sentence from the story. Choose the best meaning for the underlined word.

1. He pretended he was a mountain climber.
 - A. made believe
 - B. discovered
 - C. saw
2. He packed it round and firm and put the snowball in his pocket for tomorrow.
 - A. soft
 - B. hard
 - C. liquid
3. He told his mother all about his adventures.
 - A. thrilling happenings
 - B. scary times
 - C. sad times
4. It covered everything as far as he could see.
 - A. shone upon
 - B. spread upon
 - C. went through

Comprehension

1. At the beginning of the story what covered everything?
 - A. rain
 - B. snow
 - C. sunshine
2. Peter first pointed his toes out, and then he pointed them in. What was Peter making in the snow?
 - A. footprints
 - B. a snow angel
 - C. a snowman
3. What fell on Peter's head after he hit the tree with a stick?
 - A. leaves
 - B. branches
 - C. snow
4. When Peter climbed the snow heap, what did he pretend to be?
 - A. a skier
 - B. a mountain climber
 - C. a snowman
5. What could have happened to the snowball in Peter's pocket?
 - A. it stayed in the coat pocket
 - B. Peter put it in the refrigerator
 - C. it melted
6. What did Peter dream?
 - A. the sun had melted the snow
 - B. about the snowball
 - C. about the rain
7. How did the story end?
 - A. Peter slept all day
 - B. Peter stayed in the house to watch T.V.
 - C. Peter and a friend were playing in the snow

THE SNOWY DAY ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary

- 1. A
- 2. B
- 3. A
- 4. B

Comprehension

- 1. B
- 2. A
- 3. C
- 4. B
- 5. C
- 6. A
- 7. C



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