

THE PIG PROBLEM

Story Synopsis

The Pig Problem tells how four neighbours work together to solve an unusual problem. Seven wild pigs have been forced by dry weather to leave their habitat in the woods and have moved into Nicky's yard to look for food. (This much of the story is loosely based on an actual incident.) Nicky and her neighbours come up with different plans to get the pigs to leave the yard, but nothing works. When it begins to rain, the pigs unexpectedly move back to the woods. There is lots of humour in the text and the illustrations, but the book also nicely supports the use of a variety of drama techniques to explore scenarios in which a problem has to be solved.

LITERACY ELEMENTS

dialogue: quotation marks to indicate speech

compound words:
newspaper, leftovers,
everyone, upstairs

personification: flew
("... milk flew out of
Nicky's refrigerator")

CONNECTIONS

MUSIC
recognize that mood can
be created through music

VISUAL ARTS
produce two-dimensional
works of art

WORDS TO DISCOVER

words that describe/
convey emotion:
adjectives — amazed,
surprised, discouraged,
thrilled, determined,
annoyed
verbs — grunted,
snorted, growled

ESL CONSIDERATIONS

A picture walk through the illustrations will give the children a sense of story direction and, therefore, an anchor for their eventual reading.

Overall Learning Opportunities



Students will:

- interpret the meaning of material drawn from a variety of sources and cultures, using several basic drama and dance techniques (e.g., tableaux)
- communicate understanding of works in drama and dance through discussion, writing, movement, and visual artwork
- solve problems in various situations through role-playing and movement in drama and dance



Students will:

- use correctly the conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.) specified for this grade level
- understand the vocabulary and language structures appropriate for this grade
- retell stories and recount experiences, presenting events in a coherent sequence
- view, read, and listen to media works with simple messages or factual information and describe what they have learned

ACTIVITY MENU

Exploration: A Tableaux Play, page 55

Guided Reading, pages 56–58

As a Group, pages 59–60

- *Volunteer Mayors*: using role-play to explore problems and solutions
- *A Problem at our School*: designing a role play to present a problem and solution
- *Alphabetizing Favourites*: using word cards and role-play to practise alphabetizing
- *Last Becomes First!*: using a word game to increase vocabulary

Independent Work, pages 61–63

- *BLM 21*: a checklist to evaluate a role play
- *BLM 22*: demonstrating understanding by searching the storybook for information
- *BLM 23*: demonstrating understanding by recalling details from the storybook



A Tableaux Play

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- interpret the meaning of stories, using several basic drama techniques
- describe their own and others' work, using drama vocabulary (e.g., identify the tableau as a way of crystallizing a moment of importance in a story)
- demonstrate the ability to move and control their bodies in space and time

YOU WILL NEED

- space to create tableaux
- overhead projector (optional)

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- work collaboratively to make the play a success?
- use face and body expressively to communicate ideas?
- listen and contribute ideas at appropriate times?

Reading the Story

After reading the story *The Pig Problem* with the children, write on the board:

What the Street Looked Like

Before the Problem:

With the Problem:

The First Plan:

The Second Plan:

The Third Plan:

The Solution:

The New Problem:

In discussion with the children, fill in brief descriptions of the different scenes and what people and/or animals were doing. Encourage children to reread parts of the book to check the facts.

Starting the Exploration

Tell the children that they are going to create a tableaux play of the story *The Pig Problem*. There will be seven tableaux altogether, to match the street scenes they have just described.

Divide the class into groups: People and Animals. You can be the Narrator.

Working on the Tableaux

Give the children time to look again at the story and the pictures and plan their tableaux. Work with the children as they decide what is to be in each tableau.

For example, the tableau for *Before the Problem* could be a peaceful street scene with some People working in their gardens, some walking slowly along the street, and

some "chatting" with their neighbours. The Animals (pigs) are in not in plain sight, but they could stay at the sides of the tableau scene, watching and waiting. For the tableau *The Problem*, the Animals (pigs) could be destroying Nicky's front yard, while People are "inside" the houses, watching.

Some children might like to be responsible for choosing background music for the play. Offer a variety of musical pieces (see *Grade 2 Audio CD Tracks 11, 14, and 23*) for their consideration.

Rehearse with the children so that you are reading from the text as they are telling the story through tableaux.

Sharing

Sharing takes place as the children discuss different ways of presenting tableaux.

To encourage children to reflect on their work, ask questions, such as:

- Did you enjoy planning the tableaux? Why?
- Which tableau was your favourite? Why?
- Would you rather play one of the People or one of the Animals? Why?

Extension

The children might like to switch Animal and People roles, and repeat the tableaux play.

This Extension works well with Stand-Alone Activity 5: "Pet Store Role Play" on page 133.



Use an overhead projector as your stage light. Have children practise placing their tableau in the square created by the light. Teach them to move when the light is off and to be frozen perfectly still when the light is on. For greater effect, have the classroom lights switched off as the projector is turned on, and vice versa.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- retell a story in proper sequence
- use a variety of reading strategies to understand a piece of writing
- identify characteristics of different forms of written materials
- use their knowledge of word endings to recognize the same work in different forms

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- use the illustrative material as an information source?
- use prediction as a comprehension strategy?
- capture the mood of the story?

Setting the Scene

Note: The illustrations in this story are very detailed and highly descriptive of the storyline. You will want to give the children considerable time to look at each of them before asking questions to focus their reading. You may wish to engage the children in a picture study of each page by having them look at the picture and then having them respond to a question about the picture, such as:

- What do you notice in the picture that's humorous (unusual, important, surprising, unexpected, etc.)?
- What do you like best (enjoy most) about this picture?
- What do you think the artist, Steve Attoe, enjoys most about this picture?

Before you show the book to the children, tell them the title of this story: *The Pig Problem*. Ask what they think a "pig problem" could be. Invite the children's responses and encourage them to embellish their suggestions by providing prompts such as: "Interesting; tell us more." "Hmmm. What makes you say that?" "How did you think of that idea?"

Tell the children that you're going to give some clues as to what the pig problem is and that, as soon as they think they can describe the problem, they should raise their hands. Say:

- 7 a.m.
- a woman named Nicky
- a radio announcement
- a house on Willet Street
- seven *enormous* pigs
- digging
- a front lawn

As you give the clues, singly, insert wait-time to encourage the children's imaginations and guesses. Add the next clue, and the next, and the next, until someone comes up with a response that closely approximates the situation. Then show the cover of the book to the group. Ask:

- From the clues I gave you, why do you think Nicky looked out her bedroom window?
- Why do you think she's talking on the telephone at 7 a.m.?
- What do you think would bring the seven enormous pigs to Nicky's front lawn?

Before you open the book to pages 2 and 3, say:

- The title of the book is *The Pig Problem*. It was written by Lalie Harcourt and Ricki Wortzman and illustrated by Steve Attoe.

Read page 2 aloud to give the children the background to the cover illustration. Then, emphasizing the words *doing* and *seven*, read page 3 aloud to explain the cover illustration. Ask:

- What do you think will happen next? Let's find out.

Reading the Story

Have the children open their books to page 4 and look at the illustration. Say:

- The neighbours came to help. Read this page to find out what they decided to do.

Ask:

- Why is it a good idea to make a plan?
- What would *you* do to get rid of the pigs?

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- appear to have control over the story content?
- read and understand the story vocabulary?
- provide correct information in response to your questions?

Say:

- Read page 5 to find out what Nicky and her neighbours decided to do.
- Do you think their plan will work? Why? Why not? Read pages 6 and 7 to find out.

Say:

- Their first plan didn't work, so they need to have another meeting to come up with a second plan. What would you tell them to do? Read pages 8 and 9 to find out what they decided to try.

Ask:

- Do you think this plan will work? Why? Why not? Read pages 10 and 11 to find out.
- Turn to page 12 and look at the illustration as I read this page to you.

Repeat "Their new plan was so clever that they were sure it would work." Point to the illustration on page 13. Ask:

- What are Nicky, Lilly, Darren, and Tat doing? Does it look like a good plan? Why? Why not? Read this page to find out what their plan is.
- Look at the picture on page 14 to see how their plan looked in action. Read this page to find out if it worked.
- They were very discouraged when they went back inside to get out of the rain. Read page 15 to find out what amazed them when they peered out the window to look at the pigs.
- What did they see?

Read the last sentence aloud: "At last the problem was solved and their worries were over" Ask:

- Any guesses as to what the illustration on the next page — the last page — will be?

Encourage the children's responses and then have them turn the page, look at the illustration, and read the caption. Ask:

- Were their worries really over?
- This book is titled *The Pig Problem*. What would be a good title for the next book?

Independent Reading

Invite the children to enjoy the story again by reading it independently, with as little assistance as possible.

After Reading

Ask:

- Have any of you had a problem like the one Nicky had? Tell us about it. (Accept any "problem" that comes close.)
- What do you think about the way Nicky and her neighbours went about trying to solve their problem?
- Were they successful? How did the problem get solved?

Revisit the Story

Hold a conversation with the children using open-ended prompts, such as:

- What was your favourite part of the story? Why?
- How do you know this selection was a story and not a play or a poem?
- Do you have a favourite illustration? Why is that one your favourite?
- Could this story really happen? Why do you think so/not?
- If you'd lived on Nicky's street and had seen the pigs digging up her lawn, what would you have done?

TEACHING tip

After the students share their ideas about whether or not the story could happen, you could tell them that the authors got the idea for the story from a radio news report that told about a lot of pigs that got loose and invaded a residential street.

Engage the children in recalling specific language from the selection. Say:

- The authors use a lot of different words to describe how the characters feel at different times through the story.

Turn to page 3. Ask:

- How did Nicky feel when she threw back the curtains and saw the pigs on her front lawn? That's right, she was *surprised*. The root word is *surprise*. What do we add to make the word say *surprised*? That's right, we add the letter *d* because *surprise* already ends with the letter *e*.

- How did she feel when she saw what they were doing to her front lawn. Yes, *annoyed*. What does that word mean?

- The root word is *annoy*. What do we add to make the word say *annoyed*? That's right, we add the letters *ed*.

- Turn to page 7. How did everyone feel when the first plan didn't work? Yes, they were *disappointed*. (*disappoint* to *disappointed*)

- On page 8, there's a word that describes how they felt about solving the pig problem. That's right, *determined* is the word. What does that word mean?

- When the second plan didn't work, how did they feel? Turn to page 11. That's right, *frustrated*. What does that word mean?

- On page 14, it says that there was a feeling of *confusion* when the best plan of all didn't work. Can you find that word? Good for you!

- Because it was raining, everyone went inside. On page 15, when they peered out the window to look at the pigs, how were they feeling? Yes, they were feeling very *discouraged*. Have you ever felt discouraged? Tell us about that time.

- However, their discouragement changed to a very different feeling — very quickly — when they saw that the pigs were leaving. How did they feel? And then, when they realized that the pigs were going home, they felt *thrilled*. How do *you* feel when you feel thrilled? Talk about that feeling. When have you felt thrilled? Why did you feel that way?

- When Nicky looks out her front door and sees what she sees, how do you think she feels? Why do you think so?

Invite the children to use **BLM 22** to search for picture details and to record where they find them.



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Reinforce the Story

Invite the children to use the illustrations as a springboard to an oral retelling of the story. Say:

- Turn to page 2 and look at the picture. What time is it? Who's in the picture? Why does she look so startled? Who would like to get the story started?

- Now look at the picture on page 3. Nicky's doing two things. What are they? She was feeling startled before. How's she feeling now? Who would like to go on with the telling of the story?

Continue to have the children look at each of the illustrations on the subsequent pages. Encourage them to respond to questions you ask about what's happening in the picture. Then invite a volunteer to tell that part of the story.

Use **BLM 23** to encourage the children to recall illustrative details.



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As a Group

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- speak in role as characters in a story, assuming the attitude and gestures of the people they are playing
- use the vocabulary, tone of voice, and body movements appropriate for a specific character when role-playing

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- speak in role, choosing more formal language as a mayor?
- remain in role while listening to others during the role play?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- communicate understanding of works in drama and dance through discussion
- write in role as characters in a story
- distinguish between real and imaginary situations in drama

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- concentrate during role-playing?

Activity: Volunteer Mayors

Gather the children in a circle, seated on chairs. Inform them that you are going into role.

Tell them that you are delighted that they have volunteered to help you solve your city's problem. After all, as mayors of cities across Canada, they are used to making important decisions. Introduce yourself as the chair of the committee — the mayor of Bigcity. Come out of role and invite each child to invent a name of a city of which she or he is the mayor. Ask them to make a name tag containing their formal name, e.g., Mr. Zaku or Ms. Jones, and the name of the city.

Still out of role, decide as a group what problem the mayors will be asked to solve: stopping people from littering, making sure that everyone gets enough exercise, etc.

Go back in role. Address the children formally, and have them address you as Madame Chair or Mister Chair. Begin the meeting by outlining the problem.

Use chart paper to assist you if you wish.

In role, devise several solutions, then decide as a committee which solution will be used. Consensus can be achieved through discussion, but a vote may be necessary. Use your power as the Chair to throw little “monkey wrenches” into the discussion, pointing out the complications of choosing one solution over another, if these complexities are not emerging in the discussion.

Invite children to write — in role as mayor — the solution their particular city will use and why they have picked that particular solution.

Extension

Discuss possible difficulties that each solution might bring up. Divide the children into two groups and have each group present one possible difficulty connected with any of the solutions suggested.

Activity: A Problem at Our School

Engage the children in a discussion about problems that they see at school, in the playground or lunchroom. Make a list.

Divide the class into two or three groups. Have each group choose one problem that they would like to role-play. Work with each group in turn to develop a short role play showing the problem.

Ask each group to role-play for the class. After each sharing, have the children make suggestions as to how the problem might be solved. A child with a suggestion could take the place of one of the role-players and try out the solution she or he suggested.

Then have each group role-play the solutions they think will work best.

If the children are willing and ready, have them rehearse their “problem and solution” scenes for performance for other classes. As part of the rehearsal, use the checklist on **BLM 21**.

If they are not ready to perform for others, use the checklist with them as a class evaluation of their role-playing.

Extension

Children can write in role as their characters about how they felt during the problem and during one of the solutions.



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LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- begin to use resources (e.g., personal, class, or published dictionary) to confirm spelling
- print legibly

YOU WILL NEED

- word cards, pencils, and markers
- drawing materials

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- use a word resource to confirm spelling?
- grasp the idea of alphabetical order and demonstrate an understanding of letter sequence?

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students will:

- describe, share, and discuss thoughts, feelings, and experiences and consider others' ideas
- use appropriate gestures and tone of voice when speaking

OBSERVING FOR ASSESSMENT

Does the student:

- wait his or her turn?

Activity: Alphabetizing Favourites

Give each child a word card with the following printed on it:

Of all the animals in the world, my favourite is a(n) _____.

Have the children finish the sentence by using pencil to print a one-word completion, the name of their favourite animal. Ask the children to check the spelling of the name of the animal, then print over the pencil spelling using a marker.

Next, ask each child to assume a freeze-frame pose of the animal. Invite the other children to guess what the animal is.

Have the children arrange themselves in alphabetical order according to the animals they chose. Start the line by having the child who chose, say, *aardvark*, stand in

a particular place. Then *bear*, *cat*, and so on can get in line behind. Tell the children whose animal names begin with the same letter to stand side by side. If appropriate, at another time, you can teach the children how to look at the second letter of the word in order to alphabetize.

Extension

Invite children to draw a picture of their favourite animal, with the animal's name printed in large letters. Have the class display the pictures, arranged in alphabetical order.

This Extension works well with Stand-Alone Activity 28: "Forget Brushes" on page 156.

Activity: Last Becomes First!

Invite a child to name an animal. Invite another child to name an animal that begins with the last letter of the first-named animal, e.g., piG, Giraffe. The next child would name an animal that begins with *e* — the last letter of giraffe. In this way, elephanT could continue on to TurtLE, to EeL, to LamB, to BeaR, to ReindeeR, and so on.

When a child is unable to think of an answer, he or she may pass and the next child can have a turn. When no one can think of a response, end that game and start another. If you count the number of animals that are named in the first game, the group challenge is to better that score in the next game.

Extension

Select a different topic, e.g., the Social Studies or Science unit you're studying, and play the game again using vocabulary from that domain.

Name _____ Date _____

Can the Audience Understand Our Role Play?

Questions	Yes	No	Idea
Can we all be heard? _____			_____ _____
Can we all be seen? _____			_____ _____
Are we doing what real people do? _____			_____ _____
Are we saying what real people say? _____			_____ _____
Is the solution possible? _____			_____ _____
Is there another solution? _____			_____ _____

Name _____ Date _____

Find the Page

Find a page where...

	Yes	No
• you can see six houses. _____		
• five books are on a table. _____		
• there's a cat. _____		
• there's no pig. _____		
• you can see two houses. _____		
• Nicky is standing up. _____		
• the pigs are going back to the woods. _____		
• you can see the third plan. _____		
• Nicky is sitting down. _____		
• there's a red car. _____		
• it's raining. _____		

Name _____ Date _____

Without looking, can you remember?

Circle yes or no.

1. There are five pigs on Nicky's lawn. yes no
2. Nicky's alarm wakes her up at 10 o'clock in the morning. yes no
3. Nicky's hair is red. yes no
4. There is a piggy bank on top of Nicky's refrigerator. yes no
5. Tat, Darren, and Lilly are Nicky's neighbours. yes no
6. The old clothes were in a box. yes no
7. The pigs were scared of the noisy creation. yes no
8. The back door of Nicky's house is blue. yes no

Now open your book and check your answers.