



Discussion Guide for

THE SIGN PAINTER'S DREAM

Author:

Roger Roth

Publisher:

Crown

THEME:

In visually oriented society, signs serve many purposes - they inform us, direct us, persuade us, sell ideas and products, and keep us safe.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Visit the bright lights and big city signs of New York's Times Square in *The Painters Dream*, narrated by Jamie Farr. In this episode, LeVar takes a look at the role that signs play in our everyday lives and goes behind the scenes of an advertising agency and the Artkraft Strauss sign company to witness the creation and placement of one of these spectacular, neon-lit signs in Times Square.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Discuss the concept of "communication." Identify different ways that people communicate. What are some means of communication that we have now that were not available in the past?

Before viewing the program, discuss different purposes of signs. After viewing, make a list of the functions of signs (i.e., advertising and selling, providing information, giving directions, safety) and add examples of different types of signs for each function. Discuss how these different signs may influence the actions of people, both positively and negatively

Clarence's attitude toward his job was not very positive at the beginning of story. Why was he so unhappy with his job? Discuss what accounted for change in attitude at the end.

Discuss what it means to be "generous." How was Clarence generous in the story? Have students think of ways that they have been or could be generous. Encourage them to think of ways in addition to monetary generosity.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Take a walking tour of the school and have students take note of how many different signs they see and the purposes of those signs. If possible, take a walking tour of the school neighbourhood or larger community. After their walks, have students compile their information to find out what kinds of signs they have more of at school compared to the types of signs they see outside of school.

Have students take an inventory of the need for signs in the classroom and make them. They will need to think of the purpose for each sign and design it accordingly. Possible places for signs include the library corner, art centre, math manipulatives area, almost anywhere! They might also plan and make signs about the use of materials, safety concerns, and maintaining the classroom environment. A welcome sign for the classroom entryway is a must.

Examine different types of advertisements to find what strategies are used to persuade people to purchase a product or utilize a service. Obtain some magazine ads and videotape some examples of commercials that are designed to influence children and bring them to school. Common advertising techniques that are fairly easy to identify include: 'testimonial,' the use of a famous person to endorse a product, "bandwagon," everybody has/uses this, so you should too; "transfer," using our emotions or things such as babies or puppies to persuade us to buy; and "plain folks," the use of an ordinary, on-the-street person to endorse the product. Discuss with students ways in which these techniques are successful in selling products. Have students work in co-operative groups to invent a new toy or cereal (because these two areas target children heavily if advertising, they will be most familiar) and plan how they will persuade people to buy it. What signs will they display in stores? What will their magazine or newspaper ad look like? Have them create and perform a radio or television commercial for their product.

Discuss billboards and the different places that children have seen them. Include in the discussion, the advantages and disadvantages of billboards. Have someone from a company who puts messages on billboards come into the classroom and talk about how billboards are made.

Clarence's nickname was "Crabby Clarence." Have students brainstorm some nicknames that would fit Clarence at the end of the story, using an alliterative adjective. Also, have them think of a nickname that would fit themselves using this same pattern.

Have the students try rebus writing. Show several examples and compose some sentences as a whole class before children attempt their own. The following books might be useful, as they are written in a rebus style: *Bunny Rabbit Rebus* by David A. Adler (Crowell), *Who Stole the Apples?* by Sigrid Heuck (Knopf), and *Inside a Barn in the Country* by Alyssa S. Capucilli (Scholastic).



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Have students examine different types of lettering. The review book, *Letter Jesters*, will provide many examples. Have them search newspapers and magazines for different typefaces and sizes, cut them out, and glue them on paper to write their names and other words. Have them try different fonts writing their names on the computer. (CD ROM fonts and typeface software hundreds of possibilities). Encourage them to look carefully at the differences in style. Also, have students begin to notice the different types of lettering in books. The typeface in picture books is often chosen to complement the style of art in the illustrations or the story's mood or theme. Examining the print on book covers is a good place to start this activity. For example, students can contrast the title print of these **READING RAINBOW** feature books: *Watch the Stars Come Cut*, *Hound Trip*, *Gila Monsters Meet You at the Airport*, *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*.

Have students put their name up in lights! Using 1/2-inch square graph paper, have them plot their names in block letters. They need to put a circle in each square. (it they make sure they touch all four sides of the square, the circles will be fairly uniform in size). These circles represent the light bulbs. They then colour the circles using phosphorescent crayons. Shine a black light on them and watch them glow. Have the students use these names on paper - "marquees" they create with a "movie" title about themselves, such as *Starring Andrew in A Fisherman's Tale!*"

RELATED THEMES:

- dreams
- feelings
- communication without words

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

- Silent Lotus
- Feelings

Arthur's Eyes See 'Curriculum Extension Activities' for additional programs.

About The Author

Roger Roth worked in a sign shop before pursuing a career in art. He is also the illustrator of *The Giraffe That Walked to Paris* and lives in New Jersey with his two cats.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

I READ SIGNS by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow)

THE LETTER JESTERS by Cathryn Falwell (Ticknor & Fields/Houghton Mifflin)

THE SIGNMAKER'S ASSISTANT by Tedd Arnold (Dial)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

COMMUNICATION by Ailiki (Greenwillow)

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE? by Caroline Arnold (Franklin Watts)

PUFF-FLASH-BANG! A BOOK ABOUT SIGNALS by Gail Gibbons (Morrow)

SIGNS by Ron and Nancy Goor (Crowell)

YOU DON'T NEED WORDS! by Ruth Belov Gross, illus. by Susannah Ryan (Scholastic)

I READ SYMBOLS by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow)

I WALK AND READ by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow)

WITHOUT WORDS by Joanne Ryder, illus. by Barbara Sonneborn (Sierra Club Books for Children)

Programs Details

Length:

30 minutes

Subject Areas:

USA Life/Society

Audience Levels:

Ages 6 - 11

Order Number:

5-4396SG

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