



Discussion Guide for

UNCLE JED'S BARBERSHOP

Author:

Margaree King Mitchell

Illustrator:

James Ransome

Publisher:

Simon & Schuster

THEME:

Through persistence and belief in one's self, dreams will often come true.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Uncle Jed's Barbershop, narrated by Regina Taylor, is the story of dreams deferred and finally attained. After years of setbacks, Uncle Jed's dream of opening his very own barbershop in the segregated South is fulfilled with the love and support of family and friends. Highlighted in the episode is the a capella quartet, The Persuasions, who demonstrate that faith, determination and a little help from others can make any dream come true.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Discuss with students people who help them in their lives. This discussion might include people who are in helping professions, such as police officer and fire fighter, but also people who help them on a personal level.

Invite students to share "hair-raising" tales. These tales might include stories about their worst haircut and who gave it to them, their biggest hair-related disaster, or their worst experience at a barber/beauty shop.

Explore the concept of dreams. Discuss different kinds of dreams-nighttime dreams that can be good or bad, daydreams, and dreams that are aspirations. Discuss what might influence dreams and actions that people might take as a result of having a dream. Discuss dreams as hopes for the future.

Invite students to share a dream they have had that involved persistence and patience, but eventually came true.

Two aspects of American history are important to understanding the story: the Great Depression and segregation. Supply some background on both topics. As a follow-up to this discussion, students might question older family members and friends about their recollections of either topic and share information as a class.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Discuss different careers students would like to have when they "grow up." As a class, brainstorm a short list of questions they have about their chosen careers. Have them research their chosen careers by using print and media resources. They might write letters or use the Internet to find answers to their questions. Encourage them to think of creative ways in which they can share what they learned with the class, such as presenting information while dressed as a member

of a profession, partnering with another child and being interviewed, writing and illustrating a book, or other ideas.

Explore the concept of "heroes." Brainstorm ways to complete the sentence, "A hero is..." Make this list the center of a bulletin board, and have students search for pictures and make drawings of their heroes to place around the list. Discuss the concept of "fame" in relation to heroes, so that students realize that heroes need not be well-known in order to be admired for their accomplishments.

Using Martin Luther King's phrase, "I have a dream..." ask students to think of a dream they have for the future of the world and its people. Have them draw self-portraits of their faces. Display their faces with a thought "bubble" above their heads, in which they have drawn and captioned their "dream."

Uncle Jed is a fictional character, but many people who have lived in the past or are now living have undergone sacrifices and have shown tremendous determination in order to make their dreams come true. Tie the program into a study of biographies as a form of literature. To introduce biographies, brainstorm with students the types of information they expect to find in a biography.

Read a biography to the students. (The two review books for this program, Alvin Alley and Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree, are two possibilities.) Have students compare what they learned from hearing the biography to their brainstormed expectations. Display several biographies for students to read and invite them to share what they are learning.

View the program segment on The Persuasions a second time and encourage students to notice how the singers used their voices as substitutes for musical instruments. Plan a lesson with the music teacher on singing a cappella.

Uncle Jed was not always paid for his services with money. Have students research bartering and the payment of services with all different types of items. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such a system.

Celebrate uncles! Locate stories and poems about uncles. Have students tell, write, and draw their own favorite uncle stories. Bind these stories into a class book for sharing. Plan an "Uncle Day" celebration in which uncles are invited to some special events in the classroom. Students who do not have uncles may "adopt" one for this occasion. (Aunts may substitute!)



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Organize some hairstyling festivities for fun and experimentation. (Secure parental permission ahead of time and solicit parent volunteer help. For hygienic reasons, have each student bring her/his own comb and brush from home and store them in labeled zip-locked plastic bags.) Invite a barber/hairstylist into the classroom to demonstrate a haircut. Have mousse, hair spray, barrettes, washable hair paint, etc., and lots of mirrors available for personal hairstyling. (No haircutting allowed.) Take photographs of all the magnificent "dos" and compile them into a class book, "Room ___'s Barbershop."

About The Author:

Margaree King Mitchell was born and raised in Mississippi. The author of several stories and plays, she is a librarian at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, where she now lives with her husband and son. Uncle Jed's Barbershop is her first children's book.

About The Illustrator:

James Ransome has illustrated several books for children, including Reading Rainbow review books, Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt and How Many Stars in the Sky? He won the Coretta Scott King Award for illustration for The Creation by James Weldon Johnson and for Uncle Jed's Barbershop. Ransome's father has worked as a barber for over 25 years and recently opened his own barbershop. A North Carolina native, James Ransome now lives in Poughkeepsie, New York with his wife and daughter.

RELATED THEMES:

- families
- heroes
- dreams and aspirations
- careers

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

- Amazing Grace
- Ruth Law Thrills a Nation
- The Lady With The Ship on Her Head
- Knots on a Counting Rope
- Appelemando's Dreams
- The Wonderful Towers of Watts

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

A PEDDLER'S DREAM by Janice Shefelman, illus. by Tom Shefelman (Houghton Mifflin)

ALVIN AILEY by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illus. by Brian Pinkney (Hyperion)

ZORA HURSTON AND THE CHINABERRY TREE by William Miller, illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu (Lee & Low)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

SATURDAY AT THE NEW YOU by Barbara E. Barber, illus. by Anna Rich (Lee & Low)

MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE by Marie Bradby, illus. by Chris K. Soentpiet (Orchard)

THE STORY OF RUBY BRIDGES by Robert Coles, illus. by George Ford (Scholastic)

KATY'S FIRST HAIRCUT by Gibbs Davis, illus. by Linda Shute (Houghton Mifflin)

JEREMY'S FIRST HAIRCUT by Linda Walvoord Girard, illus. by Mary Jane Begin (Whitman)

GRANDFATHER'S DREAM by Holly Keller (Greenwillow)
HATS OFF TO HAIR by Virginia Kroll (Charlesbridge)

KEEP ON SINGING: A BALLAD OF MARIAN ANDERSON by Myra Cohn Livingston, illus. by Samuel Byrd (Holiday House)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, THE LAST DAY OF SLAVERY by William Miller, illus. by Cedric Lucas (Lee & Low)

AMANDA'S PERFECT HAIR by Linda Milstein, illus. by Susan Meddaugh (Tambourine)

WHEN JO LOUIS WON THE TITLE by Belinda Rochelle, illus. by Larry Johnson (Houghton Mifflin)

EL CHINO by Allen Say (Houghton Mifflin)

RAGTIME TUMPIE by Alan Schroeder, illus. by Bernie Fuchs (Joy Street/Little, Brown)

Programs Details

Length:

30 minutes

Subject Areas:

Relationships/Support

Audience Levels:

Ages 6 - 11

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