



Discussion Guide for

OWEN

Autho

Kevin Henkes

Publisher:

Greenwillow

THEME:

Growing up may involve some painful changes, but even adults can have fun.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Owen, narrated by Matthew Broderick, examines some of the more humorous aspects of childhood through the eyes of a little mouse who refuses to be separated from his "blankie." This episode brings out the kid in LeVar, who, through a series of flashbacks to his own childhood, explores positive ways in which children can deal with changes in everyday life and growing up.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Before viewing the program, have students relate personal experiences with objects to which they have had a strong attachment, such as a blanket, a stuffed toy, or a pillow. Did this object have a name? Do they still have it? If not, what happened to it?

Have students recall their first day of school. What feelings do they remember having? What do they remember about their classroom and teacher?

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being an older brother or sister, having older brothers or sisters, or being an only child.

Have students talk about different kinds of things they do themselves to have fun. Then discuss what their families do together for fun.

Discuss what it means to be a "good neighbor." Have students rate Mrs. Tweezers as a neighbor by telling ways in which they felt she both was and was not a good neighbor.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students brainstorm a list of things they used to do when they were younger that they have now outgrown. Balance this list with a second list of things they can do now that they could not do when they were younger. Encourage them to talk about their feelings during these life changes. For example, in what ways were their younger child activities and habits hard to give up? What new challenges did new activities bring? What had to happen in order for them to be able to do "older" child activities (e.g., grow taller, become physically stronger, learn a skill, etc.)?

The story of Owen follows an easily identifiable problem-solution format. Use yellow (like Fuzzy) paper and make a problem-solution "map" of the story. Divide the paper into three parts. Label the left third "story problem"; label the right third "story solution"; and divide the middle third into three parts, labelled "Mrs. Tweezer's solutions."

Have students fill in all sections. (For small group or whole class collaborations, use a 12- x 18-inch piece of yellow construction paper.)

Have students write and illustrate an autobiography of their lives before they came to school. As a group, brainstorm the questions they should answer in their autobiography, e.g., where they lived, what they liked to do, who their friends were, who was in their family, preschool experiences, etc. Invite them to interview their parents if they cannot remember details. Place the autobiographies in the classroom library.

Conduct a stuffed animal survey and record the data on a graph. Begin by brainstorming a list of common stuffed animals. Give everyone a copy of this list (with additional space for "other" stuffed animals) to take home. Have students search their homes for stuffed animals and mark the numbers on the survey sheet, adding unlisted ones as appropriate. When they return the sheets to school, compile totals and transfer the information to a chart copy of the survey form. (This exercise provides good practice for the students in using a calculator.) Have students make a graph from the data on the chart. Invite students to bring in a favorite stuffed animal from home and make a display.

Provide each animal guest with a "name tag" for its owner to complete, that includes the following: "My name is _____ belong to _____"

_____ My favorite thing to do with _____ (owner) is _____

Working in cooperative groups, have students design their vision of the ideal playground. Before the groups begin work, discuss various objects and places that might be found at a playground. Have the groups draw their playgrounds on mural paper and label the different areas. Display their designs.

Extend the talk about siblings from the discussion topics above to conducting a survey of the students about their birth order. Give each student a ~ x 3-inch square of paper and have them draw a self-portrait (head only-encourage them to use the entire space). Use the self-portraits to build a graph. Draw a baseline and label four columns: "oldest," "middle," "youngest," and "only." Have students place their faces on the graph according to their birth order. (Discuss the importance of placing the faces equal distances apart.)

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Give each student a yellow square of paper (5- x 5-inch) and have them create a design on it. Indicate that they will be putting all of their squares together to make a new blanket for Owen. They will need to decide on the arrangement of squares in the blanket by figuring the number of rows they need and the number of squares in each row. They will also need to decide which designs they wish to place next to each other. Fasten the squares together and display with the book. If possible, use cloth and fabric crayons instead of paper and stitch the squares together. Students can place this "blanket" on their knees or around their shoulders when they read the book. Obtain these other "mouse" books by the author/illustrator of Owen, Kevin Henkes: *Julius, the Baby of the Wodd*; *Chrysanthemum*; *Sheila Rae, the Brave*; *Chester's Way* and *A Weekend with Wendell*. Discuss his style of illustration in these books and in Owen. Discuss the problems these characters have in relation to the students' own lives. The "mouse" children in these books are faced with life changes much like "real" children are.) Select scenes from these books for dramatic role playing.

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS

- *Through Moon and Stars and Night Skies*

RELATED THEMES:

- families
- growing up
- starting school
- play

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kevin Henkes has wanted to be an artist ever since he was a child. His first book, *All Alone*, was published when he was just 19. He enjoys the challenge of writing as well as illustrating and has written several novels in addition to his picture books. He describes creating children's books as "what I was meant to do." Owen was a Caldecott Honor Book in 1994.

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

BLANKET

by Margot Apple (Houghton Mifflin)

NEVER SPIT ON YOUR SHOES by Denys Cazet (Orchard)

THE BLANKET THAT HAD TO GO

by Nancy Evans Cooney, illus. by Diane Dawson (Putnam)

THE BIRTH-ORDER BLUES by Joan Drescher (Viking)

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING by Phoebe Gilman (Scholastic)

PLAYGROUNDS

by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House)

GERALDINE'S BLANKET by Holly Keller (Greenwillow)

BIT BY BIT

by Steve Sanfield, illus. by Susan Gaber (Philomel)

TIMOTHY GOES TO SCHOOL by Rosemary Wells (Dial)

EDWARD UNREADY FOR SCHOOL by Rosemary Wells (Dial)

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

IRA SLEEPS OVER

by Bernard Waber (Houghton Mifflin)

BORN IN THE GRAVY

by Denys Cazet (Orchard Books)

DARCY AND GRAN DON'T LIKE BABIES by Jane Cutler, illus. by Susannah Ryan (Scholastic)

Programs Details

Length:

30 minutes

Subject Areas:

Occupations

Audience Levels:

Ages 6 - 11

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