

Educator Discussion Guide

IMAGINE THAT!: HOW DR. SEUSS WROTE THE CAT IN THE HAT

by Judy Sierra

Illustrations by Kevin Hawkes

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2019-2020

Grade 3-5

Submitted by Melody Brewton

School of Library and Information Science, LSU, Baton Rouge

ABOUT THE BOOK

In 1954 there were wonderful children's books but not fun, funny, engaging beginner reader books. Dr. Seuss was a successful children's book author but he had never written a beginner reader specifically for a first-grade audience. His fans begged him to write a book that beginner readers couldn't resist, to help these students learn to read. He would have to only use words from an official beginner reader word list. Could he do it? How would he do it? What would he use for inspiration? What was his writing process, write then draw illustrations or draw then write? This book will take you on the journey to discover how Dr. Seuss took this challenge, created *The Cat in the Hat*, and forever changed the world of beginner reader books.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judy's parents read to her constantly, especially poetry. When she was seven, they built her a puppet theater and Judy gave her first performance, "The Three Wishes." In college, she studied literature and went on to become a children's librarian. A few years later, she set out on my own as a puppeteer, and studied traditional puppetry in Indonesia, and traveled all over the U.S. as a teacher. She combined what she had learned as an avid reader and writer, as a librarian and children's puppeteer, and has been writing books for children ever since.

Biographical information taken from the website

<https://www.kidsreads.com/authors/judy-sierra>

Accessed October 2, 2018.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ever since he was a young kid, Kevin already loved to draw and paint and he loved to play with modeling clay and dig in the dirt. In art class; he did a lot of different types of art projects, including sculpture with clay, plaster, wire, and papier-mâché. After graduating from college in Utah as illustrator certified, Hawkes moved to Boston, Massachusetts. He worked for two years in the children's section of a bookstore, studying the artwork in picture books every day at work when he had the chance. During this time, his own work was shown to publishers in Boston and New York. When asked what he enjoys drawing most, Kevin Hawkes replies, "Enormous objects flying through the air and dramatic shadows."

Biographical information taken from the website

<https://www.eduplace.com/kids/tnc/mtai/hawkes.html>

Accessed October 2, 2018.

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Make a Cat in the Hat, hat!

Did you ever think of creating your own red and white hat from the Dr. Seuss classic book *Cat in the Hat*? Then look no further because this activity will challenge not only your fine motor skills but it will also have your child have fun and also be educated on how to create and also wear a fun Cat in the Hat type of hat! If the question is yes to you ever having wanted to have your own similar hat like the cat in this Dr. Seuss book, then take part in creating this activity! This hat-making process will help your students and kids learn how to draw very fun and basic shapes. It will also teach them how to cut/style these hats they create for a very enjoyable activity.

Here's what you'll need: cheap paper plates, scissors, and red markers.

What you do: Fold the paper plate in half. Draw a line around the outer border of the paper to create a rectangle shape. Cut along the lines and finally unfold the paper. Then have your children/class start on making/drawing their stripes. Total time of the activity: 5 minutes total not including prep time. *Site accessed 10/15/18 <https://www.icanteachmychild.com/easy-cat-in-the-hat-hat/>*

Discussing Dr. Seuss Books

Ask your students to share what their favorite Dr. Seuss book is and why. Notice which books seem to be the most popular. Ask them if they think writing picture books for children would be difficult and why or why not.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What elements of the cover image of this Dr. Seuss book hint at the content of the story?
2. In the book we get a small look into what life was like in the 1950's. Compare/contrast this to what life is like today for youth in the 21st century.
3. If Dr. Seuss (Ted Geisel) were to be an accomplished and newer author in the 21st century, do you think his writing style and book content would be different? Why or why not? Discuss.
4. What was Dr. Seuss's inspiration to write a first-grade reader?
5. Pick a book written by Dr. Seuss and imagine you are the illustrator of the cover art. Which book would you choose to create a new cover for and why did you select that book? Draw a quick sketch of your new cover of the book you chose.
6. When Ted Geisel went to his studio to write, what did he use in the writing process and what was his main inspiration for getting into the writing mode?
7. Ted was known for inventing a lot of words for his books. What are some of these words mentioned in the book? Come up with some crazy and creative words yourself. What are these new words?
8. When Ted began thinking of different animals to write about how did he decide on cat? What other words and animals was he thinking about in this stage of the writing process?
9. Dr. Seuss wrote about different items the cat in his book could juggle. What other items besides the ones listed do you think the cat should juggle and why?
10. Ted used tricks in order to convince readers to turn the pages. What were some of these tricks? Could you come up with a trick or two of your own inspired by his process? If so, what are they?

11. Dr. Seuss did a book tour and met with many different children from different cities across America. If he were here today and visited you and this classroom, what would you say to him? What book of his would you have him sign? Why?
12. The next challenge Dr. Seuss took on is also described. Could he write a beginning reader book using only 50 words? Did he succeed? If so, what was the book he wrote that turned into this beginning reader?
13. Imagine you had a real-life cat for a pet like the Cat in the Hat. What would you and your cat do if you could do anything for one afternoon?
14. If you could be any Dr. Seuss character for Halloween which character would you be? Discuss.
15. What do you think the no-nonsense list is? Give some examples. Be creative.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Health and Physical Education:

This activity is a basic fun and quick workout that involves the Cat in the Hat. The link shows the activity in detail and the video. It can range anywhere from in between 3 minutes and longer. The activity is used for kids to be active while also getting exercise and implementing the use of Dr. Seuss's beloved 'Cat in the Hat.'

<https://christinachitwood.com/dr-seuss-inspired-fitness-for-kids/>

Art:

Thing 1 and 2 Blow Painting Craft for Dr. Seuss's *Cat in the Hat*: This activity can be done with or without templates. The templates are found in the URL and if certain student's don't wish to draw the characters, they can print and use the picture. The activity requires a few simple art supplies, a passion for art, and a student's imagination and hands. This activity will be a little messy except your kids can have fun in the classroom with paints and the Cat's best 2 companions. This activity is fun, simple, and also allows for the students to share their own sense of individuality.

<https://iheartcraftythings.com/thing-1-2-dr-seuss-craft.html>

Create your own Seuss-inspired creature: Dr. Seuss liked to make up new words and creatures and draw them. You can share some of these made up creatures from his books with your students for inspiration. Ask students to create their own new animal. They will need to draw their animal and name it. Ask them to share it with the class.

Math:

This Seusstacular Roll and Cover game practices both counting and adding 3 numbers together and is an introductory basic math activity. You will have your kids roll 3 dice, use addition, and come up with a sum. It is Seuss themed for a lot of ages. This activity is perfectly suitable for younger kids and some older kids. Printable included.

<http://www.mrslietteslearningdetectives.com/2012/02/seusstacular-roll-and-cover-freebie.html>

Science:

This activity involves a few basic supplies and your imagination. This activity is a fun and good way to introduce basic science equipment and tools to do a simple and fun chemistry experiment. It involves mixing, seeing different colors, and separating liquids. The activity is brief and to the point, it's a science experiment that also involves Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat, and most importantly it can be done just about anywhere and will involve all students and exercise their minds.

<http://www.toddlerapproved.com/2016/02/cat-in-hat-science.html>

Social Studies:

Gather your materials. You will need a copy or two of our [Oh, The Places I Want To Go printable](#), a pencil, scissors, stapler, and a globe or atlas. Start by cutting out the printable. Next, have your child look at this great big world and decide what they would like to add to their must-see list! Write it down.

<https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2014/03/dr-seuss-inspired-geography-activity-free-printable.html>

Vocabulary:

- Beginning reader
- Outlandish
- No-Nonsense List
- Official list
- Doodle
- Juggle
- Bump
- Printing press
- Fantastic
- Challenge

RELATED WEBSITES

Seussville

<http://www.seussville.com/Educators/educatorClassroomResources.php>

Educational activities and portal for kids that's Dr. Seuss related

Cybraryman

<https://cybraryman.com/drseuss.html>

Games and fun activities for Dr. Seuss fans and children

Teachersfirst

<https://www.teachersfirst.com/spectopics/seuss.cfm>

Resources and information about Dr. Seuss and his books