

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The All New Jonah Twist by Natalie Honeycutt

Book Information

Natalie Honeycutt, The All New Jonah Twist

Quiz Number: 251

Avon Books, 1986

ISBN 0-380-70317-3; LCCN

110 Pages

Book Level: 3.8

Interest Level: MG

Jonah begins third grade determined to be responsible enough to be allowed to get a pet.

Topics: Community Life, School; Family Life, Pets; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship

Main Characters

Granville Jones the undersized third-grade boy who is new to Jonah's school; he harasses Jonah because it is his way of showing Jonah that he wants to be friends

Jonah Twist the third-grade boy who must prove he is responsible in order to get a pet; he is upset when he has to sit next to Granville instead of Robbie in Mrs. Lacey's class

Juliet Fisher a girl in Jonah's class who likes to announce when Jonah is not doing what he is supposed to be doing; Granville silences her by calling her "nosy"

Mr. Rosetti the elderly man who lives close to Jonah's house and asks Jonah to water his garden while he is away

Mr. Twist Jonah's father, who is divorced from Jonah's mother; he takes Jonah and Todd camping during the summer

Mrs. Lacey Jonah's teacher, who does not expect Jonah to be as good a student as his brother; she encourages Jonah to be nice to Granville

Mrs. Twist Jonah's mother, who is proud of her responsible older son Todd and wants Jonah to be more reliable

Robbie Jonah's friend in school who is unconcerned when Jonah cannot sit next to him

Todd Twist Jonah's older brother, who is commended for his responsibility and academic record; he gets in trouble, however, for feeding table scraps to his hamster

Woz Todd's hamster

Vocabulary

dawdle to move slowly

fleeting brief, quick

menace a threat

pulverize to destroy by pounding into small pieces

rattled distracted, upset

sensation a feeling

Synopsis

Jonah Twist cannot have a pet until he becomes responsible like his older brother Todd, so Jonah decides to become a new person. On his first day in third grade, he is the first student at school. He is anxious to see his friend Robbie, but before the bell rings Jonah needs to use the bathroom. He tries to save the seat next to him so Robbie can sit by him, but when he gets back, an unfamiliar boy is sitting in the adjacent seat.

When the class plays a "get acquainted" game, Jonah finds out that the new boy's name is Granville Jones. Granville says he can kill Jonah with his bare hands. After lunch, the students are asked to write about their summer vacations. Jonah spends so much time illustrating his initials, however, that he only writes one-and-a-half sentences before time is up. Juliet Fisher embarrasses him by announcing to the class that he always dawdles. Mrs. Lacey mistakes Jonah's illustration for a jet, and she gives Jonah permission to finish his paper at home. Jonah now feels obligated to make up a story about jets, but he is uncomfortable lying about his vacation.

The next day, Jonah is racing to school when Granville jumps out of the bushes at him. Jonah then discovers that Granville's family has moved in next door to Mr. Rosetti, Jonah's elderly friend. Granville races off, and Jonah arrives at class just in time. He is eager for Mrs. Lacey to learn the students' names quickly so that he can move away from Granville and sit by Robbie. When the class has to practice cursive writing, Jonah is flustered because he is still working when the other students

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have finished; however, Mrs. Lacey is not upset with him. At recess Jonah plays baseball and Granville demonstrates his athletic ability. Jonah is on base when Granville taunts him about his shirt. Jonah realizes that, in his rush to get to school, he left the house in his pajama top. In the afternoon, Juliet alerts the class that Jonah is daydreaming.

As the week progresses, Jonah feels more anxious about school. He is certain Mrs. Lacey is disappointed that he is not like his older brother. Jonah feels he is doing better at home, though, and on Friday he and his brother go to spend the weekend with their father, who is divorced from their mother. Jonah tells his father about the pet he wants and also mentions the trouble he is having with Granville. Jonah's father suggests that Granville wants to be Jonah's friend.

On Sunday afternoon Mrs. Twist asks Jonah to buy some bread at the store. On the way, he stops at Mr. Rosetti's house to discuss a job Mr. Rosetti has for him. Mr. Rosetti wants Jonah to water his garden while he is out of town. He offers Jonah a pumpkin as payment. Jonah is bringing the bread home when Granville ambushes him and the bread is crushed. Jonah is relieved when his mother does not scold him about the bread.

On Monday Jonah asks Mrs. Lacey for permission to move to a seat away from Granville. She insists that he wait two weeks to see if he and Granville can get along. Mrs. Lacey also reassures him that he is doing fine with his schoolwork. That afternoon Mrs. Lacey takes the class to the library to research animals for their projects. Jonah wants to research marmots, but he is sidetracked by books about hamsters. The information he finds suggests that his brother Todd may be making his hamster sick when he feeds it table scraps. Jonah is about to look for information on marmots when Juliet announces that since he already has his book, he should return to the class as Mrs. Lacey had instructed. Jonah feels trapped and returns to the room to do his project on hamsters.

After school Jonah is watering Mr. Rosetti's garden

when he thinks of a way to get revenge on Granville. He races away without turning off the water. At the store Jonah buys a pack of gum. At dinner Jonah tells Todd that he should not save his ravioli for his hamster. Jonah is showing his mother the book when he remembers the garden. He runs back to the garden, but it is already flooded. When Jonah tells his mother what happened, Todd teases him. Mrs. Twist silences Todd by scolding him for not feeding his hamster properly.

The next day Granville is absent from school. While Jonah is working on his project, he draws a fly being hit by a flyswatter and labels it "Granville." Mrs. Lacey catches him and tells him to speak to her during recess. At recess, however, she does not mention Granville but, instead, asks him about his project. Jonah admits that he does not want to do his project on hamsters. Mrs. Lacey tells him he can do his project on marmots instead. She says that just because he is absentminded does not mean he cannot do things well.

On the way to school the next day, Jonah admits to Mr. Rosetti that he flooded the garden. Mr. Rosetti quickly forgives him and says Jonah will still get his pumpkin. Later in class Jonah offers Granville the gum. He knows gum is forbidden in school, but he persuades Granville to chew it by saying he is trying to be Granville's friend. When Mrs. Lacey questions Granville about the gum, Granville joyfully announces that his best friend Jonah gave it to him. Jonah is mortified because his plan to get Granville in trouble has backfired.

After school Granville invites Jonah to his house. Jonah says he does not want to be friends with Granville, but when Granville tells him that he just pretends to be tough because he is small, Jonah starts to sympathize with him. A week later Jonah and Granville are good friends, and Granville gives Jonah advice on how to persuade Mrs. Twist to let Jonah have a cat.

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Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

At first, how does Jonah feel about having Mrs. Lacey as his teacher?

Jonah is worried because Mrs. Lacey taught Todd several years earlier. Because Todd is a model student, Jonah is used to teachers being disappointed because he is not like Todd. Early in the story, Jonah is anxious when Mrs. Lacey talks to him because he continually expects her to express disappointment. Jonah also feels frustrated because Mrs. Lacey will not let him switch seats. He begins to feel more comfortable with Mrs. Lacey, however, because she is patient with his absentmindedness and assures him that he is doing fine in class.

Literary Analysis

How does Todd treat Jonah?

Todd is very insensitive to Jonah's feelings. He likes to point out Jonah's shortcomings, and he tries to keep Mrs. Twist focused on his own needs. He does not support Jonah when Jonah wants to get a pet. Todd also seems to like the idea that he is the good son and Jonah is the bad son. To reinforce his superiority, Todd uses Jonah's academic worries to point out how easy third grade was for him.

Inferential Comprehension

How is Jonah different at the end of this story from the way he was at the beginning?

Jonah changes in several ways throughout this story. In the beginning Jonah is fearful that he is going to do poorly in school. His relationship with his mother suffers because his mother thinks he is irresponsible. He feels mistreated by his brother and yearns to be best friends with Robbie. He also has a great deal of animosity toward Granville. By the end of the story, however, Mrs. Lacey has eased some of Jonah's concerns about school, Jonah has improved his relationship with his mother, and Jonah and Granville have become best friends.

Constructing Meaning

What does Granville suggest that Jonah do to persuade his mother to let him have a cat?

When Jonah tells Granville that he has to be responsible in order to get a cat, Granville notes that being responsible is hard and says that Jonah may have to find another way. He says that when his cat has kittens, Jonah should take one home to his mother. She will think the cat is so cute that she will let Jonah keep it. When Jonah says that his mother is really tough, Granville reassures him that kittens are irresistible.

Teachable Skills

Differentiating Fact and Opinion Jonah has very distinct opinions about other characters in the story. These opinions are significant because they influence his actions. Have the students make a chart showing Jonah's opinions about three characters of their choice. Ask students to explain how his opinion affects his relationship with each character. Also ask the students to evaluate whether Jonah's opinions were based on fact and whether they were accurate.

Understanding the Author's Craft This story focuses on Jonah's thoughts and feelings, but he is not the only character struggling with problems. Have the students choose an event from this book and rewrite it from either Mrs. Twist's or

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Granville's point of view.

Extending Meaning Jonah is uncertain about how his mother will determine whether he is responsible enough to have a cat or the specific ways he can become more responsible. Have students think of specific criteria Mrs. Twist could have outlined for Jonah to meet. Have the students write their own lists and then discuss their ideas in class.

Responding to Literature Although Jonah really wants a marmot, he settles for a cat because he cannot give a marmot what it needs. Have the students think about what kind of pet they would like to have if they could choose any animal. Then have the students do research to determine what would be needed to care for this animal. Have them write a paper concluding whether they could actually meet the needs of their chosen animal. Students should use their research to support their decision.