

Teachers' Guide for *The Girl with the Cat* by Beverley Brenna (illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan)

Webbing of Related Activities to Engage and Deepen Reader Response

(framework adapted from Charlotte Huck)

Author of Webbing: Beverley Brenna

****intended grade level: K-6**

Summary: *The Girl with the Cat* is a story based on the real-life letter of a girl named Caroline Markham (later to become Caroline Zelizney) who wanted the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon to purchase a borrowed bronze statue. This story contains messages about the value of art in bringing people together, and the value of words in creating change. In this case, Caroline's persuasive letter made a difference, emphasizing that children as well as adults can change the world. There is a memorial bench in Caroline's name placed by her family in the conservatory of the children's museum in Saskatoon.

Art Activities	Considering Alternatives
<p>Use the materials in the Art Centre and experiment with your own collage cats to create a group Cat Gallery.</p> <p>Google "Bronze Cat Sculpture" to select a bronze cat that will be your "muse". Write the life story of this cat. Create a shoebox diorama to reflect the cat's favorite environment.</p> <p>Draw an outline of Caroline. Write words inside the outline that reflect her emotions and thoughts. Write events outside the outline that summarize things that happened to her from the story.</p> <p>Use pottery to create your own sculpture. Make up a story about these characters and share with at least two other people.</p> <p>Examine Brooke Kerrigan's illustrations in the story. Create a piece of art using some of the techniques you see her using.</p>	<p>What if the cat had been purchased by the Gallery at the beginning, instead of loaned?</p> <p>How might the story have changed if Caroline had been able to bring her cat with her when the family moved to Saskatoon?</p> <p>What if Caroline hadn't been able to raise the money for the Gallery to purchase the statue?</p> <p>How might the story be different if instead of a statue, it was something else Caroline wanted to pay for with the public's help?</p> <p>What kind of "Go Fund Me" Campaigns have you heard about? How has the internet made these kinds of campaigns different than in past years?</p>

Creative Writing

How might the sculptor who made the statue have learned his craft? Develop a backstory to explain the skill and subject of this bronze work.

Write a dialogue the bronze cat might have with a real cat, or Caroline, or someone else.

Have you seen anything in an art gallery that “speaks to you?” After taking a trip to a local gallery, write a fiction or non-fiction piece about one of your favorite art works.

Consider a fictional character you may be working on in writers’ workshop; what might be an important piece of art to this character? Sketch it in prose or storyboard format.

Write a series of diary entries from the perspective of Caroline’s real cat, left behind in Toronto.

Write a list of things you and your class could do to support a new student like Caroline moving to your community.

Think of a letter you could write about asking for a change in your community? What cause is important to you? Create a class bulletin board of “Our Important Letters” and decide if there are any you wish to send.

Write a note that the artist might have included with the sculpture, asking for special care in its new home.

Re-write Caroline Markham’s letter in email format with more contemporary language.

Drama

Characters A & B improvise a scene where A is Caroline, collecting money to save the statue, and B is someone she is approaching for help. Switch roles. Talk with the large group about your experience in each role.

Characters A & B improvise a scene where A is Caroline’s mother or father and B is Caroline (or her brother), talking about how she doesn’t want to move to Saskatoon. Then, after the move, Caroline (or her brother) tells her parent what she (or he) is unhappy about. Begin the dialogue with the line: “Do we really have to move?” End the dialogue with the line: “So that’s what I hate about having to live here!”

Work with a small group to perform *The Girl with the Cat* through creative choral speech or Readers’ Theatre.

Invent a conversation that Caroline might have with Nina, the girl in the statue.

Create a Tableau scene of the group of children hanging out near the sculpture in the Gallery. Add “Voice in the Head” to show what each character might be thinking during the moment of the Tableau.

Share your version of the conversation Caroline might have had with Mr. Climer, the owner of the Gallery, when she asks if they could use her money to buy the statue.

Interdisciplinary Research Ideas

Write down some questions you’d like to ask someone who works as an artist. See if an artist can visit your classroom so that some of these questions can be answered, or plan to do a phone or email interview.

What are some different reasons families might move from one city to the other. Why might Caroline’s family have moved from Toronto to Saskatoon?

What happens when people touch bronze art? Find out

Literary Awareness

Have you heard the phrase “Man cannot live by bread alone?” Do you know where it came from? What does it mean in the context of this story? How might we rewrite it in our own words?

Are artists valuable to society? Why? Connect to the story of *Frederick* by Leo Lionni.

What is the setting of the story? How do you think the author decided on details to include in the

<p>about the chemical reaction that occurs, creating a change in color.</p> <p>Research the bronze statue “The Girl with the Cat.” Who is the original artist? What can you discover about this piece?</p> <p>Find out where the statue of The Girl with the Cat is now. What kind of travel planning would you need to do in order to visit it?</p>	<p>setting of the book?</p> <p>Notice how the pages are designed: where is the text? Where are the illustrations? Why might the publishers have made these decisions?</p> <p>Notice from the end notes that this story is based on the real story of Caroline Markham and the purchase of the bronze statue The Girl with the Cat. What steps might an author take who is writing about a real person that are different from writing about an imaginary person?</p>
<p>Personal Response</p> <p>In what ways does Caroline or her brother remind you of yourself or anyone you know?</p> <p>Why do you think people value art? Who do you know that likes art? What kind of art do they like? Write about this in your journal.</p> <p>What are some famous pieces of art you know of?</p> <p>How would you feel if you were going to move away to another city? What might your friends do to help you feel better?</p>	<p>Related Literature</p> <p>Compare Caroline’s experiences being homesick for Toronto with the homesick character in Roch Carrier’s book <i>The Flying Canoe</i>.</p> <p>Jessixa Bagley explores similar themes about moving in <i>Before I Leave: A Picture Book</i>.</p> <p>Francesca Sanna’s book <i>The Journey</i> is about newcomers arriving as refugees, and difficult things they have experienced. Search out other books on moving and making a new home.</p> <p>The following picture books all contain letters or notes or emails. Make a chart to compare the purposes of these epistles with Caroline’s letter: <i>Uncle Holland</i> (JonArno Lawson); <i>I Quit Grade One</i> (Nancy Wilcox Richards); <i>Away</i> (Emil Sher); <i>The Land Beyond War</i> (Veronika Charles); and <i>Greetings, Leroy</i> (Itah Sadu) which is framed as an email.</p> <p>The following picture books also contain themes about the value of art: <i>Frederick</i> (Leo Lionni); <i>Uncle Holland</i> (JoArno Lawson); <i>Piece by Piece</i> (Stephanie Shaw); <i>I Am Canada</i> (Heather Patterson)—featuring thirteen great Canadian illustrators.</p> <p>Compare the illustrations in this book to other books illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan. Write a paragraph describing her artistic style.</p>

Values Clarification

Was it right of Caroline's parents to make her move away from Toronto when she didn't want to? Was it right of them to leave her cat behind?

In what ways does art support us in our lives?

When should people ask others for money? Are there times it is right? Are there times it is wrong? Are there polite ways to do it vs impolite?

What kinds of things should an author do before writing about a real person? If someone wanted to write a story about you, what would you like them to do beforehand?

Other

Music: Think of a tune for Caroline's story.

Cloze Comprehension: Try chorally reading a section of the story with every 5th word blocked out. Are you able to predict words that make sense and sound right? This practice helps you become a stronger reader because it adds prediction skills alongside phonics decoding skills.