



BOOK ISLAND

Teaching Notes

Here Comes Mr Postmouse

by Marianne Dubuc

translated by Greet Pauwelijn

Synopsis

It's Monday morning and Mr Postmouse sets off to deliver the mail. He pulls his cart of parcels to each house, greeting in turn the families who live there. Marianne Dubuc's illustrations depict the homes of the town's inhabitants in intricate detail and children will enjoy examining the domestic lives of the animal characters. Dubuc has designed perfect homes for each family, based on their characteristics and her clever Heath Robinson-style contraptions will capture children's interest and reward their attention to the minute details of her drawings.

The author

Marianne Dubuc is a Canadian author and illustrator whose books have been published in over thirty countries.

Themes

This book is a humorous exploration of the lives of animal characters familiar to us through classic children's picture books. Dubuc gathers information from folklore, fairytales and natural history to present a visual feast of fascinating detail.

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Activities

Sharing the book

Students in years 1–6 will enjoy the intricate drawings and the humour in this book.

The storyline of Mr Postmouse delivering the mail is a vehicle through which the reader is introduced to the many characters in the book. However each illustration is a story in itself and the reader needs a close-up view to discover how each household operates and to appreciate the humour that Dubuc brings to her illustrations. Plan that the book can be read by a small group of students at a time to allow them to take time to work out the references the illustrator uses for the details in her illustrations. The humour depends on the reader picking up a wide range of cultural references. These will be accessible to children experienced in reading picture books. However, some readers may not be familiar with northern hemisphere animals such as bears, squirrels and cuckoos and may have limited knowledge about them.

Mr Postmouse quiz

As this book requires a detailed reading of the illustrations, readers will enjoy answering a quiz that requires them to find specific details within the text. Copies of the quiz could be kept with the book and readers could complete it as they read or they could work in pairs to find the answers.

Note: These questions are presented in the order in which the book is read. They could however be mixed up and readers could complete the quiz after they have read the book.

Suggested quiz questions

- Name two houses with fairy tale characters.
- How does Mr Bear get his favourite food?
- Why does the rabbit family have so many bunks?
- Can you work out the three different types of birds by looking at their possessions?
- Find some clues that tell us how warm it is in Señor Snake's house.
- What animal collects their mail by a pulley?
- What's Mr Postmouse wearing in Dragon's den? Why?
- Why is Mrs Mole pleased with what's in her parcel?
- Who lives next door to Mrs Mole?

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- How many jobs can you see the Ants doing?
- When does Mrs Turtle need an umbrella?
- Why are the Croc's excellent at recycling?
- Who used to own Mrs Octopus' home?
- What is Madame Dung Fly's special decorating style?
- What is Mr Wolf planning?
- What are the Bat Sisters up to?
- What is that machine on top of the Penguin's place?
- Find out some more information about Mr Yeti.
- What does the bridge between Mr Yeti's place and the Goats' place remind you of?
- What are the Skunks making in their loft?
- What is in the suspicious parcel?
- What is the last parcel to be delivered?

Students can be invited to make up additional quiz questions when they're familiar with the text.

Finding facts

Pair the students and have them investigate the characters' houses for clues about the animal's lifestyle. When they have listed their clues, they can compare their lists and add in any clues that they may have been missed.

Example: Goats are nimble and are good climbers. They can live in cold climates.

Mix and match

The students can create a matching game. Have them write the names of each animal family on a small card and the contents of each parcel on matching cards. They may choose to illustrate the cards as well. They can then jumble the cards and invite students in another group or class to match the character cards to the correct parcel card.

Investigating contraptions

Marianne Dubuc has created some clever contraptions for her characters' homes. Discuss what a contraption is. Have each student choose one of Dubuc's contraptions and either write an explanation of how it works or draw it using symbols such as arrows or captions to show how it works.

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Designing contraptions

After investigating the contraptions in *Here Comes Mr Postmouse*, students can be challenged to create a contraption to entertain a pet. They can draw or make models of their contraption and present it to the class.

Learning some sayings about animals

There are many phrases in the English language where people's habits or behaviour are compared to the characteristics of animals.

Have the students discuss the meanings of:

- As busy as a bee
- A wolf in sheep's clothing
- The chickens come home to roost
- A fly on the wall
- The fly in the ointment
- A pretty kettle of fish
- To play the giddy goat

They can add similes and metaphors to the list throughout the term, expanding their knowledge of English idiom.

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