
TIGHT TIMES

Author: Barbara Shook Hazen

Illustrator: Trina Schart Hyman

Publisher: Viking

THEME:

Even when times are hard, it's possible to have lots of fun without spending a cent—by working together and using imagination.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

In this touching story, a little boy wants a pet at a time when his family is having financial trouble and must hold the line on expenses. LeVar visits a pet show and discovers all kinds of unusual pets, including pet rocks. He explains that even during “tight times,” there are all kinds of ways to have fun and that working together and using imagination are what is important.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Ask students to tell about activities they do for fun at little (or no) cost.

Discuss things that families can do to cope with “tight times.”

Discuss with students the types of animals which make good pets and differentiate them from wild animals that are usually best left on their own. Include in the discussion the dangers of trying to befriend wild animals.

Ask students if they could have any kind of animal for a pet, what would they choose and why?

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Collect a variety of recyclable materials, including plastic and cardboard containers, in different shapes and sizes. Have students invent a toy made from the materials. Display all the toys in a “toy store” and have students mark each toy with a price (10 cents or less). Provide an opportunity for students to shop for the toys, using real coins.

Using the leftovers from the recyclable materials, invite small groups of students to invent games that don't cost anything. Encourage them to be creative. Allow each group to demonstrate its game and provide time for the class to play the games.

Recall some of the inexpensive games the children in the program played (e.g., Rag Basketball, Newspaper Crumble Race, Yogurt Lid Toss, etc.). Gather the materials needed for these games and play them in the classroom, gym, or on the playground.

Solicit donations of old socks, cloth scraps, felt, buttons, fabric trims, and the like, and make sock puppets. Have students work in small groups to create a simple puppet show starring their sock puppets.

Divide the class into small groups and have each group decide on a pet (e.g., dog, cat, hamster or gerbil, rabbit, bird, fish, etc.). Have each group determine the cost of owning its pet. As a whole class, brainstorm the kinds of information the groups will need to gather, such as cost of food, cost of veterinary care, special supplies needed, any licensing fees, and the like. Discuss the various sources for this information. For example, they might call a veterinarian or pet store, look in catalogs and newspaper ads, or write letters. After each group collects the needed information, have the students share their findings with the class. To conclude the activity, have the class rank order the pets from most to least expensive to care for.

As a class, make a “Pet Care Handbook.” Have the groups from the above activity compile the data they collected about the various pets. Set up a page format that includes the information plus some tips for taking care of a particular pet and a sketch of the animal. Bind the finished pages into a book.

Take a class survey of the students' pets and make a pictograph of the results. Give students a square of paper 2 inches x 2 inches and have them draw a picture of their pet. Glue the pictures under the appropriate headings (e.g., dog, cat, fish, etc.).

Make a “Pet Gallery” bulletin board. Invite students to bring in pictures or drawings of their pets to display on the board. Have them make construction paper “frames” for the pictures and labels identifying the pet and its owner by name. Students who do not have pets may display the pet of a family member or friend or a “wish pet.”

RELATED THEMES:

libraries
money values

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #49 — Brush
Program #52 — Duncan and Dolores
Program #93 — Mrs. Katz and Tush
Program #112 — Martha Speaks
Program #72 — The Adventures of Taxi Dog

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

A native of Dayton, Ohio, Barbara Shook Hazen had difficulty reading as a child, but used that disability to enhance her creative talents. She has worked as a children's book editor and in magazine publishing. She has written numerous books for children and presently lives in New York City.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

Trina Schart Hyman was born in Philadelphia and decided at an early age that she wanted to be an artist. The author/illustrator of well over a hundred books for children, she states, "I illustrate books because I love stories almost as much as I love to draw." She received the Caldecott Award for *St. George and the Dragon* and Caldecott Honor Books for *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins*. She presently makes her home in New Hampshire.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

WHEN I WAS YOUNG IN THE MOUNTAINS
by Cynthia Rylant, illus. by Diane Goode (Dutton)

PET SHOW
by Ezra Jack Keats (Macmillan)

THE TERRIBLE THING THAT HAPPENED AT OUR HOUSE
by Marge Blaine, illus. by John Wallner (Four Winds)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

I REALLY WANT A DOG
by Susan Breslow & Sally Blakemore, illus. by True Kelley (Dutton)

PETS!
by Melrose Cooper, illus. by Yumi Heo (Henry Holt)

A ROSE FOR PINKERTON
by Steven Kellogg (Dial)

THE BOY WHO WAS FOLLOWED HOME
by Margaret Mahy, illus. by Steven Kellogg (Dial)

FINDING A JOB FOR DADDY
by Evelyn Hughes Maslac, illus. by Kay Life (Albert Whitman)

I WANT TO BE A VETERINARIAN
by Stephanie Maze (Harcourt Brace)

EMMA'S PET
by David McPhail (Dutton)

MY MOMMY MAKES MONEY

by Joyce Slayton Mitchell, illus. by True Kelley (Little, Brown)

EDWARD GETS A PET

by Michaela Morgan, illus. by Sue Porter (Dutton)

MY DADDY DON'T GO TO WORK

by Madeena Spray Nolan, illus. by Jim LaMarche (Carolrhoda)

DADDY, COULD I HAVE AN ELEPHANT?

by Jake Wolf, illus. by Marilyn Hafner (Greenwillow)



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