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Activity Guide

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Today Was a Terrible Day

ABOUT THE STORY

Second grader Ronald Morgan is just having one of those days where nothing can go right for him. He drops his pencil, gets caught forging his mother's name, eats the wrong sandwich, squirts a little girl by accident, and that's just his morning! It's not until he's on his way home with a letter from his teacher that his day starts to look up.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Reilly Giff was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1935. She received her B.A. degree from Marymount College and her M.A. from St. John's University. She also received her professional diploma in reading from Hofstra University. In addition to being an author, she has spent time working as a public school teacher and a reading consultant. She has written several humorous books for middle grade readers, as well as other picture books.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Born in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1948, Susanna Natti is the illustratort of several books. She received her B.A. degree from Smith College, and also attended the Montserrat School of Visual Arts and Rhode Island School of Design. Her credits include *Frederick's Alligator* for which she won the 1979 Christopher Award, *Harold Thinks Big*, a Junior Literary Guild selection, and the Cam Jansen mystery series.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask the children if they've ever had a bad day. Have some of them share their experiences. What constitutes a bad day? Explain that in this book, Ronald Morgan is having a day where everything seems to go wrong, until he gets a surprise on his way home from school.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "What are some of the things that went wrong for Ronald in school?" (*dropped his pencil, ate wrong sandwich, squirted girl with water, knocked plant over, was made fun of because he can't read, didn't catch the ball, etc.*)
- "Why was Ronald nicknamed 'Snakey'?" (*because he was caught squirming under his desk whiled trying to retrieve his dropped pencil*)
- "Why did Ronald only eat a cookie and half a candy bar for lunch?" (*he had to give his sandwich to the little boy who's sandwich Ronald had mistakenly eaten earlier*)

- "What did Ronald's expect the teacher's note to say?" (*that he misbehaved that day*)
- "What did the teacher's note really say?" (*that she was very sorry he had a bad day, and that the next one would be better because it's her birthday*)
- "How did Ronald feel when he realized he had read Miss Tyler's note all by himself?" (*excited and anxious to share the wonderful news*)

Vocabulary

Be sure students have an understanding of the following terms. Depending on age, simply discuss the terms, or have children look them up in a dictionary.

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| forgotten | workbook | initials |
| faucet | plant monitor | window sill |

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Language Arts: Word Hunt #1

Hold a contest to see who can locate all twenty verbs that end with "ed" in the story first. The winner may be allowed to read the list to the rest of the class. (*started, laughed, showed, watched, dropped, tiptoed, landed, called, noticed, cried, played, watered, signed, asked, missed, looked, spelled, finished, yelled, knocked*)

Language Arts/Creative Writing: The Next Day

Have students write a continuation of the story that shows how the next day goes for Ronald. Maybe there is a birthday party at the school? Maybe he has another bad day? What is Miss Tyler's reaction to the plant? Maybe he gets advanced to the next reading group? Have children read their continuations to the rest of the class.

Science: Plant Parade

Miss Tyler has several plants in her classroom. If your space is appropriate, consider introducing some plants into yours. Have children take turns being the "plant monitor" like Ronald. Use the plant for a variety of activities and lessons (measurements to see how much it grows, water measurements to see how much it drinks, experiment with plant foods, research the origin of the plant, etc.)

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Plant Study

Pair this Internet activity to the science activity above. Have the children research the type of plant you've introduced into the classroom. Look for illustrations that label the parts of the plant. Answer basic questions about it (How big can it grow to be? What is its scientific name?). Use the information to create clay models of the plant and display around the room.