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Activity Guide

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The Man Who Walked Between the Towers

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ABOUT THE STORY

In 1974, performer Philippe Petit stretched a wire between the two towers of the World Trade Center and walked across it. This Caldecott-winning book is the story of his historic walk, made by a man who saw two towers and “had to walk” between them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Mordicai Gerstein is a painter, sculptor, and prize-winning designer and director of animated films. He attended the Chouinard Institute of Art before moving to New York City where he lived and worked for twenty-five years making animated films for television. Gerstein began writing and illustrating his own books in 1980, and his many picture books include *What Charlie Heard*, another Live Oak Readalong. Mordicai Gerstein lives in western Massachusetts with his wife, Susan Yard Harris, who is also an illustrator, and their daughter.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever seen a tightrope walker perform. Have volunteers describe what the tightrope walker did. Then tell them that the book they will read is about a tightrope walker who performed a quarter-mile above New York City.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “Where did Philippe walk in Paris?”
- “How did Philippe and his friends get the cable fastened?”
- “When did Philippe begin his walk?”
- “How did the people of New York react to Philippe’s walk?” (*Cause and Effect*)
- “How do you think Philippe felt when he was walking between the Towers?” (*Analyze*)
- “Why do you think Philippe took his walk between the Towers?” (*Draw Conclusions*)

Vocabulary

Write these words and definitions on the chalkboard. Have children copy them and draw lines linking each vocabulary word with its definition.

steeple	building
reel	fell
imprinted	marked
construction	towers
plummeted	spool

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: History of the World Trade Center

Ask children to work in small groups to research the history of the World Trade Center. Groups can report on when and how the towers were built, how they were used, and what happened to them in 2001. Have groups present the information they find to the rest of the class.

Art: A Petit Poster

Ask children to think about the height of the towers that Petit walked between. On the first page of the story, the author states that they were 1,340 feet high. Have children convert this measurement into inches, yards, and miles to get a more accurate sense of how high above the ground Petit was.

Language Arts: An Article About Petit

Have children imagine that they were there when Philippe Petit took his great walk. Ask them to pretend they are newspaper writers, and have them write an article answering the news questions about the event: who, what, when, where, and why.

Physical Education: Tightrope Walking

Give children an idea of the difficulty of Petit’s achievement by having them walk a tightrope in the classroom. Place a rope or a long, narrow piece of paper along the floor. Have children take turns trying to walk on it, keeping their balance. Encourage them to imagine that they are a quarter mile above the ground as they balance.

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.

Tall Towers

Have children use the Internet to find out about the world’s tallest buildings and towers. They can find the name of a building by using the keywords *World’s Tallest Buildings* or use the names of these buildings as keywords. Ask them to find out where the buildings are located and how and when they were built. Ask them to report back to the class on what they have learned.

- Canadian National Tower
- Taipei 101
- Petronas Tower