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Activity Guide

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A Fine, Fine School

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ABOUT THE STORY

Tillie likes her school — it's a fine, fine school. In fact, it's such a fine school that the principal, Mr. Keene, decides to hold school on Saturdays too. Then he adds Sundays — then holidays. When Mr. Keene announces there will be school all summer, Tillie knows she has to do something. Will she be able to convince Mr. Keene that even the finest students need a break from their fine, fine school?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon Creech was born near Cleveland, Ohio, and discovered when she was in college that she liked telling stories. She worked as a teacher in England and Switzerland. Her first book published in the United States, *Walk Two Moons*, won the Newbery Award. She has written several other books for young readers and lives with her husband in New Jersey.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Harry Bliss is a cartoonist and artist for *Archeology Magazine* and *The New Yorker*. He has illustrated several children's books. He lives in Burlington, VT.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children how they would feel if their principal suddenly decided they would have to go to school on the weekend. Explain that the book they will read is about a school where that happens — and worse!

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “What does Tillie like to do on Saturday and Sunday?”
- “How do Tillie's brother and dog feel about school on weekends and holidays?”
- “What does Tillie finally tell Mr. Keene?”
- “What does Mr. Keene learn when he walks through the halls?” (*Draw Conclusions*)
- “Why didn't the teachers and students want to tell Mr. Keene how they felt?” (*Make Inferences*)
- “Do you agree that climbing trees and skipping are important things to learn? Explain your answer.” (*Make Judgements*)

Vocabulary

Write these words and sentences on the chalkboard. Have children copy the sentences, filling in each blank with the correct word.

amazing pyramids ceiling enormous

- Mr. Keene wants the students to learn about the Egyptians and their _____.
- The students and teachers gave a cheer that rose to the _____.
- Mr. Keene feels that his students are learning _____ things.
- Some of the students built an _____ dinosaur.

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art: The Isms

In the fine, fine school's art class, the students are learning about Cubism and Impressionism. Make available some art books with works by Cubist and Impressionist artists. Some artists to show include Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Claude Monet, and Georges Seurat. Discuss with children how these artists viewed and recorded the world, and elicit opinions from them on the artists' techniques.

Social Studies: The Romans, Egyptians, and Greeks

Mr. Keene suggests that his students learn about the ancient civilizations of the Romans, Egyptians, and Greeks. Divide the class into three groups, one for each civilization. Encourage group members to look in encyclopedias or other reference books to answer these questions:

- When was the civilization greatest?
- What lands did the civilization control?
- What kind of art and buildings did the civilization create?
- Who were some important people the civilization produced?

Groups can report on what they learn to the rest of the class.

Language Arts: Describe a Fine, Fine School

Not every school is as fine as Mr. Keene's, but all schools have their fine aspects. Ask children to write a description of the finest thing in their school. It can be the food, the auditorium, a great teacher, the playground -anything children think is fine. Have volunteers share their descriptions with the class.

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.

Schools Around the World

Have children look online to find information about a fine school in another city, town, or country. Using a city name and the keywords “school pictures”, children can take a look at another school. If possible, they can print out a picture of the school they find and share information about it with the class.