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Activity Guide

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A Hole is to Dig

ABOUT THE STORY

Filled with fanciful “definitions” for children, this book consists of a collection of drawings that illustrate the definition of something; some silly and some literal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruth Krauss obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in New York City from the Parson's School of Fine Applied Art. She worked with her husband, David Johnson Leisk, also known as Crockett Johnson, on several books. Her many children's books earned prestigious recognition, including *The Carrot Seed* and *I Can Fly*. *A Hole is To Dig* and several other works made the *New York Times Best Children's Books of the Year* lists. Ms. Krauss died in 1993.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Maurice Sendak began his work as an illustrator while he was still in high school. He attended art school at the Art Students' League to continue his education. He co-authored his very first published book, *Atomics for the Millions* when he was nineteen years old. Since then he has given us many, many wonderful books including *Where the Wild Things Are*.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask the group to explain what various items are for (such as their nose, shoes, stove, etc.). Explain that this book gives reasons for what different things are meant to be used for.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- What is a face for? (to make faces)
- What is the ground for? (garden)
- What body parts are to wiggle? (ears and toes)
- What is to build in the sand? (castle)
- What is a lap for? (not get crumbs on floor)
- What two things are to blow? (nose and match)
- What is to eat with a tablespoon? (table)
- What is a book for? (to look at)

Vocabulary

Write these words on the chalkboard and review their meanings. Then ask volunteers to use the words in sentences.

enough something clover splinters
mustache tablespoon whistle

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Language Arts: Getting the Word on Dictionaries

Show the group examples of real dictionaries. Explain that the “definitions” in this book are much simpler, and often more amusing, than the definitions found in dictionaries. Point out that although these are not regular dictionary definitions, the terms in the book still do a good job of explaining certain objects. Have the group come up with “definitions” of their own for some of the items in the book (such as “mud is to make pies with” or “snow is to make snowballs with”).

Language Arts: What Is It?

Divide the group into pairs and have them choose other objects not featured in the story. Then ask each pair to come up with the following three things for each of their objects and compile into a class book.

- a regular dictionary definition
- a not-so-serious “definition” that could have been used in the book
- a totally silly “definition”

Language Arts: Seeing Double

Review the definitions of consonants and vowels. Have the group reread the book and make a list of words that contain double consonants (such as kiss and little). Repeat this activity, only this time searching out words with double vowels (such as look and cheese).

Art: Pencil Drawings

Study the illustrations with the group. Notice how simple the author made them, yet how effective they are at conveying the action of the text. Have the students create illustrations to go with their definitions from the “Getting the Word on Dictionaries” activity above. Display around classroom.

Language Arts: How's That For a Hole?

Review the title of the book. Have each child think of another use or reason for a hole. Go around the room playing a telephone type memory game. The first child says their use for a hole. The second child repeats the first use and adds a second. So on for each child. See how many uses for a hole they can think of and remember.

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.

Maurice Sendak

Have students research this award-winning author/illustrator. Which of his books have won awards? Which awards? How does he get his ideas? Why do many of his illustrations feature a moon?

Dictionaries

Research dictionaries. Who put together the first one? Why? How was the design decided upon? What kinds of dictionaries are there?