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Activity Guide

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Caps for Sale

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ABOUT THE STORY

Awakening from a well-earned nap beside a stout tree, an itinerant cap peddler finds that his wares have been confiscated by a band of feisty monkeys cavorting in the branches overhead. In reply to his commands to return the caps, the monkeys simply imitate – and so further anger – the peddler. Finally, by throwing down his own cap in frustration, the salesman unwittingly outwits the monkeys as they follow his example.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Esphyr Slobodkina was born at the foot of the Ural Mountains and spent her childhood in Siberia. She studied art in Manchuria before immigrating to the United States. Profusely talented, Ms. Slobodkina has achieved success and acclaim as a painter, sculptor, architect, lecturer and teacher. Many of her paintings are to be found in the permanent collections of several major museums throughout the country.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

After discussing the way in which a peddler earns his or her living, ask what the term “Monkey see, monkey do” means. Describe the tendency of monkeys to imitate the actions of others. Explain that in the story, they are about to read, a peddler learns exactly what “Monkey see, monkey do” means when a band of monkeys steals his wares.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “Why did the peddler take a nap?”
- “What were the colors of the caps the peddler was trying to sell?”
- “Describe the peddler’s own cap?”
- “What did the monkeys do when the peddler shook his fists and stamped his foot at them?”
- “How did the peddler get his caps back?”
- “How do you think the monkeys felt about what was happening?” (*Make inferences*)

Vocabulary

Write the following words from the story on the chalkboard. Ask volunteers to underline the double consonants and circle the double vowels. Then have children use each word in a sentence.

Peddler	carrying	sell	street	calling
Tree	little	feel	sleep	finally
Shook	foot	really	feet	pulled

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: Animal Behaviors

Ask children to choose an animal to imitate, as the monkeys imitated the peddler. Each child can perform his or her animal imitation for the group. Then have the group try to guess which animal the child is portraying.

Drama: Mirror Images

Ask one child to stand before the group and perform simple actions. The rest of the group should try to mirror, as exactly as possible, what the child is doing. Allow each child to take a turn, and encourage them to use more challenging movements as the activity progresses.

Art: A Peddler’s Sign

Using colored markers, pencils or crayons and construction paper, encourage children to create a sign the peddler could carry to advertise his wares. Have them use vivid colors, think of a slogan for the peddler, and include an illustration on their sign. Display the signs in the classroom.

Language Arts: Sound Words

Point out to children that some words have no meaning other than the sound that is made when they are pronounced. In *Caps for Sale*, the word “tsz” is an example. Ask children to think of other onomatopoeic words, such as *whoosh*, *bam*, *woof* and *ping*.

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.

Monkey Facts

Ask children to find out more about a specific kind of monkey by directing them to use the name of the monkey as a keyword. Some possibilities are *rhesus monkey*, *capuchin monkey*, or *spider monkey*. Children can report on three facts they find about the monkey they have researched.

Se Venden Gorras

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READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “What is a peddler?”
- “How was this peddler different from the other peddlers?”
- “Why did the peddler go for a walk in the country?”
- “Why did he walk so slowly?”
- “What happened to all the caps when the peddler woke up?”
- “Why wouldn’t the monkeys give back the caps?”
(Draw conclusions)
- “How did the peddler finally get his caps back?”

Vocabulary

The peddler carries caps of many colors on his head. Have the children match the Spanish word for each color to the English word (or vice versa).

gris	blue
marrón	yellow
azul	white
rojo	red
amarillo	black
verde	gray
naranja	brown
negro	orange

Plurals

In English, as in Spanish, adding –s or –es makes a word plural. Look through the book for examples of this. See if children can find the pattern: If a word ends in a vowel, add –s; if a word ends in a consonant, add –es. Then make the following words plural. Do the same with their English counterparts. Is the rule the same in English?

vendedor	peddler
gorra	cap
calle	street
centavo	cent
arbol	tree
rama	branch
mono	monkey

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Language Arts: Something Different

This story might have been difficult if the peddler had sold something other than caps. What might have happened if the peddler had sold shoes or gloves or some other item? Let the children use their imagination to come up with another version of the story.

Math: 12 + 1 + 13

The peddler carries 13 caps on his head – his own checked cap and the 12 that are for sale. Give each child, or each group of children, 13 two-color counters. Let them come up with as many different ways of making 13 as they can. When everyone is done, list the results on the board to see how many combinations were found.

Science: Monkey Business

The monkeys in this story imitate the peddler’s actions. When he shakes his finger, they shake their fingers. When he stamps his feet, they stamp their feet. Do monkeys behave like this in real life? Use books from the library to research and learn about monkeys. Find out about their habitat and habits.

Art: Make a Monkey Mural

Using the information learned in the above activity, have children make a mural depicting monkeys in their natural habitat.