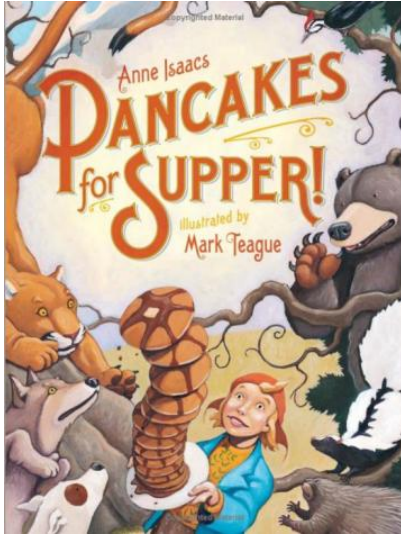


Pancakes for Supper - Teacher Activities



While *Pancakes for Supper!* depicts a most unusual adventure, it also contains universal themes that strike a chord of sympathy or humor in children of many times and cultures. These themes include: the fear, and real dangers, accompanying a young child's first attempts to make her way in the world without adult supervision or help; the desire of young children to explore and experience the world on their own; a child's mastery of challenges, even those that seem impossibly difficult; and the desire of young children to 'take the reins' of control from her/his parents. The book also includes the early-childhood theme of learning to handle clothes, and the joy of 'dressing up' that goes with it. The theme of vanity about wearing 'best clothes' is turned on its head: first, it is Toby who preens in her fancy new clothes; while at the end, the animals' vanity about wearing those very same clothes leads to their undoing.

This is a story of a child surmounting nearly impossible challenge. At the outset, Toby is dependent on her parents and at the mercy of the animals; at the end, however, Toby triumphs over the animals, and literally 'takes the reins' from her parents. This is what makes the story so appealing and irresistible to succeeding generations of children.

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This Guide is for use in organized groups such as preschool or elementary school, grades pre-K to grade 3. Some of the activities that follow will be 'too old' or 'too young' for any given group, and each leader or teacher is encouraged to adapt any activity to the understanding and experience level of participants. The activities that follow are organized into categories such as 'language arts' or 'science' or 'colors and clothing', but can be used in any combination or sequence.

A. Make your own story!

Background: *Pancakes for Supper!* is based on a story written over 100 years ago. Like the original, *Pancakes for Supper!!* features a young hero(ine) who saves her life by trading clothes for safety with a series of wild animals. In the end the animals destroy each other through vanity and greed, and the hero(ine) gets to eat the very same animals that threatened to harm or eat her/him!

Activity: Using these main elements, each student will write and illustrate his/her own version of the basic plot (see summary above):

1) Part one (student trades clothes for safety): Each student should make herself/himself the hero of the story and set it in a setting they are familiar with (such as their neighborhood). The hero sets off for school and meets wild animals along the route, that threaten to harm or eat him. The hero trades items of clothing or personal accessories (hair bow, watch, portable CD player, etc.) for his/her safety and makes it safely to school.

2) Part two (animals compete and melt into. . .): Continue the story to show how the animals compete and end up melting into _____? Let the student decide what pancake topping the animals can turn into. Examples: jam of all flavors, honey, whipped cream, ice cream, yogurt, frosting, pudding, etc.---as well as maple syrup and butter!

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Special note: Encourage the students to think of the kinds of animals that they might actually meet on route to school, or in another setting they have experienced themselves. If you are studying another country or earlier period in American history, the students might be assigned to set their stories in that country or time period, with animals chosen accordingly.

B. Dramatize the story in *Pancakes for Supper!*

Have the students make a play using the dialogue from the book as the spoken lines for actors. Make costumes and put on the play for other classes or for parents. Let different children have a turn being each of the main characters, so that everyone gets a part. Those who are not happy on stage can be in charge of lighting, sound effects, painting scenery, designing programs or costumes, etc. Decide on the setting, or use your own neighborhood or geographic region as the setting, and paint appropriate backdrops. Choose the animals to fit the setting you've chosen. Remember: skunks and porcupines live almost everywhere in the US, including cities. Other common city critters include: wild (uncared –for) dogs, raccoons, insects, rats and mice, birds. While not all are threatening, for the purposes of the drama, any animal can be a 'bad guy'.

C. Poetry (rhyme, verse) activities:

Background: *Pancakes for Supper!* the text alternates between poetry and prose. Ask the students to identify which parts are poetry and which are prose. What are the differences? Use their ideas to help define poetry and prose, and distinguish between them.

1) Rhythm: Rhythm is the 'beat' of poetry and decides which syllables get emphasized. Read a poem from the story aloud and ask students to clap or tap feet to the beat. Do the same with other, familiar rhymes/poems, including playground or nursery rhymes.

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2) Rhyme: For each line of a poem in *Pancakes for Supper!*, ask the students to come up with alternative rhymes that fit the meaning. Have a 'contest' with the whole class, or small groups working on their own, to see how many rhymes they can come up with for each rhyme word in a poem. (For example, from the bear's poem, the two rhyme words are 'good' and 'eat'. Write those words on the board and list words that rhyme with them in columns under the two words.) Or rewrite the poem with different rhymes, and feel free to change the 'sense' of the poem, as long as it fits the character of the animal 'speaking' the lines.

3) Writing a poem: Ask students to write a poem/simple rhyme about the clothes they are wearing, or better yet, their favorite outfit. This could be any form of clothing or uniform for sports, ballet, etc. ---or a 'dress up' outfit for Halloween or play. Have them illustrate the finished poem with a drawing of the outfit they've described. They can wear their favorite outfit to school and read their poems aloud to the other students while actually wearing the outfit in question. A variant to this activity is to ask students to design their ideal outfit, something they WISH they could own, and draw a picture of it. Then ask them to write a rhyme bragging about it! Where would they wear such an outfit? In what season? For what purpose? Their illustration and poem can spell out such details, as well as depicting the actual items of clothing, or accessories.

Background: *Pancakes for Supper!* is about the brave actions of a young girl confronted by wild animals, and her ultimate triumph over their threats. But it is also a celebration of colors and clothes, concepts that preoccupy young children in many places and times.

A. Clothes:

To begin, discuss the various items of Toby's clothing. Some of these items are no longer in widespread use, if at all. The story takes place ca 1800 in a backwoods setting in New England, where the wild forest has not yet been 'tamed' for farms. What are buck hide boots? Who made them? What are long johns? Why is she wearing them? And who knitted the sweater, hat, mittens,

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and long johns? Show the class pictures of children dressed in different clothes from earlier eras in North American history. For each picture, ask the children what the clothing tells them about the climate and lifestyle of the child wearing it. Where did the parents buy the clothing---or is it hand made (if this is clear from the picture)? If possible, bring in items of clothing that are hand made and compare them to machine made items. Ask the children to bring in any hand made sweaters or other items made for them.

- 1) Have the students make a small piece of clothing, such as a bandana. Or, after teaching them how to crochet, have them make a small crocheted scarf. Potatoes can be cut to create 'stamps' for printing with machine-washable paint on plain muslin.
 - 2) As a variation on activity (4) above, ask students to model or draw their favorite outfit. Then ask them to draw another picture that shows what that outfit would have looked like in ca 1800, when Toby's story takes place.
 - 3) There are places today where children (and adults) still wear clothing that is primarily hand made, and uniquely adapted to the climate and activities of the wearer. Bring in pictures that illustrate such clothing, or if you have access to a museum or other collection, take the students on a field trip to view such clothing firsthand. Collect pictures of people wearing various kinds of clothing from around the world, using magazines such as *National Geographic*. Once you have a pile of pictures, ask each student to select two pictures and describe the differences in costume, from head to toe. Challenge the students to consider why each item of clothing is designed as it is, what its function is, and how it fits the environment and life of the wearer. Finally, ask the students to think about their own clothing choices and how they made them?
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B. Colors:

Activity: Make a color wheel with the students, or draw a rainbow with colors in the order they appear in nature. Using a prism, show how white light can be broken into colors -- always the same colors, always in the same order. Read other stories with the students that emphasize colors as part of the story. Examples are: *Goodnight, Moon*; *Color, color, color, color!* By Ruth Heller; and *Babar's Book of Colors*, by Laurent de Brunhoff.

- 1) Show students how to make secondary colors such as purple from primary colors (in this case, red and blue). Show them how every color can be made using the three primary colors plus black and white. Have them experiment with paint or colored chalk or crayons to make all the colors and label or name each one.
 - 2) What colors are most popular? List the colors on the board and ask for a show of hands for each color. Which was the most often chosen as 'favorite color'? Or have a contest for 'best color' with different teams promoting the color they have been assigned, 'advertising' its virtues and listing all the wonderful things that come in that color.
 - 3) Ask students to write a story in which various colors argue about which is most important. Yellow can argue that the sun is her color and no life would be possible without the sun. Green can claim that she is most important because she is the color of growing things, which make food for everyone. Blue does the same, because blue is the color of sky, ocean and water, etc.
 - 4) Make edible colors using frosting and decorate cakes or cupcakes with rainbows made using only the primary colors and white. Then eat the colors!
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Math activities

A. Shapes

1) The animals and people in *Pancakes for Supper!*, in fact all of the things illustrated, are composed of shapes. For example: faces are circles, the wagon wheels are circles, and Papa's hat brim is a circle, as is the curling tail of the cougar.

Go through the book with students and find all the shapes you can in the pictures.

2) Using a simplified 'how to draw people' template that uses basic shapes, show students that they can use shapes to start their drawings of people.

3) Use shapes like triangles to decorate pancakes and turn them into animal faces. See the back cover of *Pancakes for Supper!* for a few ideas.

B. Measuring

1) Use the recipe on the back of *Pancakes for Supper!* to make pancakes in class. This recipe will make enough for 4 hungry people. Multiply the amounts according to the number you wish to feed. Note that some of the measurements call for $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ of something.

2) Show students what a fraction is by showing how two $\frac{1}{2}$ cup measures is equal to one whole cup. Start by filling a one-cup measuring glass half way with colored water, then take a half cup measure and use it to fill the first cup all the way. Follow the same procedure for other fractions of a cup, showing how multiplying each fraction by its denominator will make one

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whole. (the terms numerator and denominator are not important for children to know, but the concept that several fractions add up to a whole is important, as is using the 'bottom number' in a fraction to decide how MANY parts to add together).

Science Activities

A. Learn how maple syrup is made from tree sap.

1) Find a book or website that describes the process by which sap rises in a tree trunk during the late winter, and tells what purpose this serves in the seasonal cycle of a tree. All trees have sap, but only certain kinds of maple trees have the sugary sweet sap that can make maple syrup. What has to be done to turn the sap into the maple syrup we put on our pancakes? Again, your local library will have resources to help describe this process to the students. Show children pictures that illustrate each step in the process.

2) Talk about what happens to water when the temperature goes below the freezing point (32 degrees Fahrenheit or 0 degrees Celsius). Demonstrate this with a glass of water, a refrigerator, and a thermometer.

3) Now make 'snow' from ice shavings or crushed ice, and pour maple syrup over it to eat as candy. Read aloud from the passage from *Little House in the Big Woods* where Laura Ingalls Wilder describes making maple syrup and the fun she had making 'snow candy' afterwards.

B. Weather

1) Study the four seasons with students, focusing on the area in which they live. Now study seasonal differences in different regions of America. Using a weather channel on TV or weather site on Internet, find out highs and lows for various cities in America on the same day.

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On December 21? March 21? June 21? September 21? Bring in pictures that show changing leaves, snow-covered landscapes, people at a beach swimming, etc. and ask students to identify the seasons they represent.

2) What two seasons are mentioned in *Pancakes for Supper!*? (note: they are mentioned on the very first page of the story) What is the weather like when winter is ALMOST over and spring is ALMOST here? Why is Toby dressed so warmly? How does she feel in each picture, as she loses one item of warm clothing after another? Which item of clothing was most important to keeping warm? In what picture do you think Toby felt warmest? Coldest?

Ask students to draw a picture showing themselves dressed for a cold winter day and another picture where they are dressed for a hot summer day. Is there anything (eg. socks, shoes) that they are wearing in both pictures, despite the difference in temperature?

3) What other factors beside temperature make 'weather'? Talk about rain, snow, wind, and cloud cover as parts of the overall 'weather picture'. Are there any unusual storms such as tornadoes or hurricanes that occur in your region? If so, read stories to the children that describe these kinds of weather, and what makes them happen.

4. Ask students to illustrate a weather disaster they recall, or make one up that could really happen in their geographic region.

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C. Animals

Background: Animals are important characters in *Pancakes for Supper!* They talk to Toby and interact with her. They aren't meant to be seen as 'real' animals, of course, but they do show some of the 'characteristics' of real animals.

1) All animals need to eat to survive. What do cougars, wolves, porcupines, skunks, and bears eat in the wild? Most of them are vegetarian. Would any of these animals actually eat Toby? Which one(s)?

2) None of these animals uses words to communicate. Why do you think the author made them 'talk' in poems, while Toby (usually) talks in prose?

How does each of the animals –skunk, cougar, bear, porcupine, and wolf -- communicate in the wild?

3. Of the five animals in *Pancakes for Supper!*, only the wolf is a 'social' animal. That is, only the wolf lives and hunts in a pack, working cooperatively with others of its kind. Study wolf packs and how they are comprised, how they hunt together, how they communicate with each other.

How are social animals different from animals that live alone, or only with their young?

4) Study the five animals in the book. What are some distinguishing characteristics of each (what makes each special and unique)? What do they have in common? In what ways are they different? Where do they live (habitat), what do they eat, what is their life cycle from birth to death, and what animals eat them? Do they hibernate? Are they active during daytime or nighttime or both? What unusual traits do they have (the skunk, for example, is the only mammal that uses foul perfume as a deterrent to predators). Read some of the passages from

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a book such as *My Side of the Mountain* (Jean Craighead George), or *Hatchet* (Gary Paulson), which illustrate the danger of run-ins with skunks or porcupines.

5) What is an endangered animal? Some of the animals featured in *Pancakes for Supper!* are endangered. The wolf is nearly extinct in North America, and efforts to re-introduce it into the wild have met with little success. The cougar, likewise, is threatened or endangered across America. Some kinds of cougar are extinct. There are many misconceptions about animals that lead people to kill them unnecessarily. Farmers wrongly assume that wolves will eat their livestock, so they kill wolves that they see near their farms. In fact wolves only eat weak or old animals, so they strengthen a herd of cows or sheep, rather than harming it. Discuss the terms 'threatened', 'endangered', and 'extinct' with your students.

On the other hand, porcupines and skunks are not threatened or endangered, and are very numerous in most parts of North America. Bears have been reduced in numbers overall, and now find fewer safe places to live, but where they are protected they are still numerous. Ask students why they think that some of these animals have been hunted to extinction or endangered populations, while others have not been hunted or otherwise diminished in numbers.

Geography and History

A. Geography

Background: The story takes place in an unsettled part of New England in the early 1800s. At that time only the river valleys of New England were settled with farms or towns. The hilly portions of the area were still largely wild.

Ask the students the following questions and help them find the answers in books or online:

1) Where is New England? (show them on a map of the United States or North America)

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- 2) Why is this region called 'New England'? who named it? When?
 - 3) What kinds of work could Toby's father and mother have performed in the early 1800s in rural (unsettled) New England?
 - 4) Where are the regions in which sugar maples grow, and where maple syrup is harvested? Why do the sugar maples grow only in this region of the United States and Canada?
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B. History

Background: *Pancakes for Supper!!* takes place in the very early 1800's; in other words, the early years of the 19th century. At that time, the United States was a very young country, having won its independence from England a few years earlier.

What was it like to live the life of a pioneer (early settler) in the unsettled part of New England in the early 1800's?

- 1) Find books that show what life was like with words or pictures, and read them with the students.
 - 2) have a 'pioneer day' at your school. Plan ahead and enlist parents' cooperation. Here are some ideas:
 - a) Students dress up as pioneers (to the best of their ability). Some easy costume items to make include bandanas and bonnets. Some easy items to purchase are: long skirts or dresses, lace-up boots for girls, hats with brims for boys. Most of these items can be cheaply bought at thrift shops, and larger sizes can be taken in. Adult knee socks can substitute for 'long johns' under skirts or dresses. Baskets can be used instead of purses.
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b) Students participate in old-fashioned or pioneer activities. Examples: making ice cream with a hand crank; making soap or candles; cooking old-fashioned muffins or bread or candy from 'scratch'; cooking over an open fire, building miniature 'log cabins' from sticks. Make sure of safety in all activities, and guard against assigning 'feminine' activities only to girls, 'masculine' activities only to boys (even though that would be historically accurate!)

c) In *Pancakes for Supper!*, Toby's family travels by horse-drawn wagon to the nearest town. While most people no longer travel by wagon in North America, many communities still offer opportunities for children to experience old-fashioned methods of transportation. Examples are: a day ride on an old-style sailing vessel; horse rides; wagon rides or 'hay rides'; steam train rides; or a short hike with backpacks to a picnic spot. If possible, expose children to 'old-fashioned' methods of transportation available in your community.
