



Arthur Geisert

Discussion & Activity Guide: Creative Suggestions for Sharing Authors Up-close Programs with Children

This guide includes activities for students of all ages. All suggested activities and discussions should be adapted to fit your particular classroom dynamic.

On etching & illustrating books

- Arthur Geisert is an etcher. All of the illustrations in his books are created using the five-hundred-year-old techniques of copper plate etching (see *The Etcher's Studio* for a playful and interesting discussion of the process). Have students look closely at the pictures and discuss how they might have been made.
- Look closely at favorite picture books and take notice of the medium the illustrator used. How was the art created? Can these techniques be replicated in your classroom? Consider how the illustrations and text co-exist. Do the art techniques work well with the text? Explain why or why not. Are there other techniques you might consider using to convey the text? Please explain.
- Learn about the process of etching. Research how it works. When was it invented? How has it changed during the five hundred plus years of practice? What else strikes you as interesting about the process of etching?
- Etching is just one of many printing techniques. What other printing techniques can you identify? Are there some that you can practice?
- Scratch Art Activity: Explore etching through scratch art, which is a simplified multi-step printing process. Kits can be purchased and/or free scratch art activities can be found on line. ("Scratch art" on www.google.com yields more than 300,000 hits.) While scratch art is clearly not etching, there are similarities. Like etching, students will have a chance to draw, transfer images, scratch areas, get reverse images and figure out how to show texture with only two colors.

On Exploring Narrative

- *Oink* and *Oink Oink* are books that tell the story through pictures. Read these books aloud without showing the class any pictures. How was this reading received? Did it feel awkward reading one word over and over again? Then try describing the book aloud to the class. How was this "reading" received compared to the first?
- Encourage students to make a short picture book by having only one word in the text of the entire book. The word can be repeated (like *Oink*). Ascertain from them an assessment of the challenges and enjoyment of creating a book with these limits.
- Have students make another short picture book – this time with as many words as they like, but using only one picture for the entire book. Talk with them about the challenges and enjoyment of creating a book with these limits.

On Visual Details

- In many of Arthur Geisert's books, particularly the Small Town USA series (*Prairie Town*, *River Town*, *Mountain Town* and *Desert Town*), he tells dozens of stories

within each book that are strictly visual. Have students look through the pages carefully and see how many of these vignettes they can find. If they need help, the last page of text in each of these books describes many of the visual vignettes, but not all.

- The Small Town USA books (*Prairie Town*, *River Town*, *Mountain Town* and *Desert Town*) depict a perspective of life from particular regions of America. Consider some details of life in your community – be it your school, town or part of the country. Have students make a list of what they would choose to share with others for incorporation into a picture book. Discuss these lists and compare similarities and differences. Would they like to make this list into a book? Why or why not?
- When Arthur Geisert plans a book, he decides which details to include in his illustrations. This takes a special skill. Take a group of students to a busy place where there are many people and interactions to observe. Ask them to stand with a notepad for three minutes and write down what they see. Come back together and compare notes. Discuss the similarities and differences of each student's list?

On Nursery Crimes

- Arthur Geisert designed and illustrated for this book a pretty cool looking house – his salvage house – that incorporates a boxcar from a train, a steeple from a church, a slide from a playground and a bus from a school district. Have students design their own salvage houses, imagining how favorite objects can be combined into a structure that resembles a house. Share these designs and discuss favorite parts of each house. Did you know that Arthur and Bonnie Geisert are actually building a house similar to the one in *Nursery Crimes*?
- When choosing names for the pigs in *Nursery Crimes*, Arthur Geisert was looking for words and sounds that he thought were funny. “Jambo” is a French word for ham bone. Marva is a type of flower. Ames and Amien are town names that he liked. Identify a series of names that you like and explain why.

Arthur Geisert was interviewed in his studio in Galena, Illinois on May 4, 2001.

Multimedia program available at www.TeachingBooks.net beginning October, 2001.

Books by Arthur Geisert

- BEGINNER'S MYSTERY, A, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2003
- GIANT BALL OF STRING, THE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2002
- DESERT TOWN (written by Bonnie Geisert), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2001
- NURSERY CRIMES, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2001
- MOUNTAIN TOWN (written by Bonnie Geisert), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2000
- RIVER TOWN (written by Bonnie Geisert), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1999
- PRAIRIE TOWN (written by Bonnie Geisert), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1998
- ETCHER'S STUDIO, THE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1997
- ROMAN NUMERALS I TO MM, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1996
- HAYSTACK (written by Bonnie Geisert), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1995
- AFTER THE FLOOD, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1994

- OINK OINK, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1993
- PIGS FROM 1 TO 10, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1992
- AESOP & COMPANY, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1991
- OINK, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1991
- ARK, THE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1988
- PIGS FROM A TO Z, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1986
- PA'S BALLOON AND OTHER PIG TALES, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 1984

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