



Saxton Freymann

Discussion & Activity Guide: Creative Suggestions for Sharing TeachingBooks Author 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 creating Edible Arts

- After reading any of Saxton Freymann's books with your class, begin with a discussion about the way his books are illustrated. Ask your students questions about the illustrations: "How do you think the author and illustrator created the images for the books?" "What materials did they use?" "How did they get their ideas?"
- The technique that Saxton Freymann uses for his illustrations has been called "edible arts." Either define "edible" for your students or ask them what it means. Once they have an understanding of the definition, ask them to define "edible arts." Why is this term an accurate description of Saxton Freymann's technique? What other adjectives could be used to describe his art?
- Saxton Freymann begins his illustrations by shopping for the food. He looks for food that looks like people or other things he needs such as trees or buildings. Ask your students if they ever see forms or shapes in objects around them, like clouds, for instance. Invite students to share what they have seen and/or share Eric Carle's book *Little Cloud*. Conclude by asking students to look for shapes in items around the room. Do they see faces? Animals? Plants? Cars or buildings?
- Look closely at the book *Look-Alikes* by Joan Steiner or *Look-Alikes Jr.* also by Joan Steiner. In these books, images of places are created using such items as acorns, broccoli, crackers, yardsticks and zippers. Compare these images to Saxton Freymann's illustrations, especially those in *Gus and Button*. As a follow-up activity, gather a variety of foods, items from nature and household items. Use them to create your own "Look Alike" place.

On How Are You Peeling? Food with Moods

- Before reading *How Are You Peeling?*, look at some of the illustrations. Ask your students to identify how the fruits and vegetables are feeling. How can they tell? Then, read the story and compare their answers to the emotions that are suggested in the book. Point out that the entire book is written in question form. Ask, "Why do you think the author did that?"
- As a discussion or writing activity, ask your students to describe how they look when they feel angry, sad, happy, confused, etc. Then, play charades. Write down a variety of emotions, each one on its own slip of paper. Students each pick a piece of paper. They then take turns acting out that emotion without talking. If they need some prompting, ask them the same question as earlier, "What do you look like when you feel ____?" Or, "How do you act when you feel ____?" The other students guess what emotion is being acted out.

- As an art activity, ask students to draw a feeling. Results may include abstracted line drawings, drawings of faces or even drawings of fruits or vegetables similar to Saxton Freymann's images. Alternatively, provide your students with modeling clay and ask them to create an emotion in the clay. Prepare for these activities by asking your students to look closely at the food in the book. Discuss why the pepper looks happy, the apple surprised, the orange mad, etc.

On *Dr. Pompo's Nose* and *Gus and Button*

- Before reading both *Dr. Pompo's Nose* and *Gus and Button*, introduce the idea of point of view. If you think your students may have difficulty grasping the concept, try reading a version of *The Three Little Pigs* followed by *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (by A. Wolf as told to Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith) to help students understand the different stories and why different characters have those different stories or points of view.

Then read *Dr. Pompo's Nose* and *Gus and Button* and students to compare the two stories. Is there a similar message? Is there more than one way of looking at things or more than one point of view? Can there sometimes be more than one correct answer? Do things sometimes look different depending on how you look at them? Why?

- After reading *Dr. Pompo's Nose*, discuss why there were so many different interpretations of the item Dr. Pompo found on the ground. Was it Miss Sniffen's nose? Did Dr. Pompo fix it? Why did the others "look on in dumb surprise" when "Dr. Pompo put it back, right between her eyes"?

- Look closely at the pumpkins in *Dr. Pompo's Nose*. How can you tell them apart?

- Define "eponym." Find examples of eponyms or names that reveal information about the characters in both *Dr. Pompo's Nose* and *Gus and Button*.

- Saxton Freymann describes *Gus and Button* as being "about wanting to find something beyond the world that you know and venturing out into territory that you are not familiar with." What did Gus learn from his adventure? What does Gus mean when he says, "They showed me many lovely things and helped me realize that to really see what's out there, you need more than open eyes"?

- In *Gus and Button*, Gus says, "When I keep my wits about me and I keep an open mind, EVERYWHERE I look I am surprised by what I find!" Ask your students to look closely at the classroom, school grounds or home, all places they know well. Encourage them, like Gus, to find something surprising in these familiar places.

On Saxton Freymann's "A-Peeling" Books (Activities/discussions related to all his books)

- Define "pun." Saxton Freymann states that his books are about "celebrating vision and noticing visual puns." How can a pun be visual? Find examples of visual puns in his books. Are there language puns as well?

- Saxton Freymann states that, "Nature is the best teacher." He says he can "nudge it" but he can't make it more beautiful. Go on a nature walk, and look for beautiful items that you can collect such as pinecones, stones, branches, leaves, etc. Use these items, "nudging" them a

bit, to create characters. Create a story with these characters. To illustrate your story, draw or photograph your characters in action!

• Challenge! Identify all the fruits and vegetables used in Saxton Freymann's books. To help you, in the back of *Gus and Button*, a list of the food used is provided. Or play "I Spy" using *One Lonely Seahorse*. In the back of that book, foods are identified with a picture. Have fun finding each food in the story!

Saxton Freymann was interviewed in his studio in New York, NY on July 23, 2001.

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

Books by Saxton Freymann

- BABY FOOD (created with Joost Elffers), Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 2003
- DOG FOOD (created with Joost Elffers), Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 2002
- GUS AND BUTTON (created with Joost Elffers), Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 2001
- DR. POMPO'S NOSE (created with Joost Elffers), Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 2000
- ONE LONELY SEA HORSE (created with Joost Elffers), Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 2000
- HOW ARE YOU PEELING? FOODS WITH MOODS (created with Joost Elffers), Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 1999
- PLAY WITH YOUR PUMPKINS (created with Joost Elffers), Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998
- PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD (A Joost Elffers Book), Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1997

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