

Title: Extra Extra

Author: Alma Flor Ada

Grade Level: 3-6

Category: Picture Book

Synopsis: Something strange is happening in Hidden Forest. A huge beanstalk has mysteriously sprouted next to Jack Blake's house and now Jack has disappeared. In another part of the world Tortoise and Hare are competing in a race, Mr. Gepetto is missing and a half-chicken is traveling to Mexico. Written in newspaper format, this enchanting picture book features news about some of our favourite fairy-tale characters.

Thematic/Curriculum Connections:

Science, Media Literacy, Math, Poetry, Character Development, Health, Global issues, Big Ideas

Activities:

Read page one article "**Mysterious Plant Causes Alarm**"

Theme: **Seeds and how they grow:**

1. Discuss what a seed is and where it comes from. Seeds come in different shapes and sizes. Display some seeds from beans, fruits, nuts, flowers to show some variety.
2. **Writing:** How does a seed travel? Birds, animals, the wind are some of the ways seeds travel. Have the students write a story from a plant's point of view, explaining how the seed might end up on or inside an animal or bird. Where does the animal take them? What type of plant/seed are they?
Write a poem about a seed or a plant.
Write an advertisement about magic seeds that grow into enormous plants.
3. What helps a seed grow? Have the students sprout a bean seed in a cup with wet paper towel. When it gets too big for the cup, move it to a larger pot. Children can estimate how big it will grow and how fast it will grow. They can create a chart to follow the growth.
4. How do plants help us?
5. What are some problems created by plants?
6. If you were a plant in a garden what would you be? Why?

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Questions and Activities:

On pg 1, the news article reports “ *A huge vine, resembling an oversized beanstalk that reaches the clouds, seems to have grown overnight and is alarming residents in this quiet area of Hidden Forest.*”

- Does this story remind you of another story?
- What do you think caused the plant to grow to this tremendous size?
- Where do you think this plant leads?
- Do you think it is harmful or helpful? Why?

Pg 2&3: Before reading the opinion/ editorial pages, try one or more of the following activities:

1. **Writing:** Have the students make two lists. One list for how the plant could be useful and one stating potential problems. They could also work in groups or in pairs.
2. Divide the class into two groups and have a debate on the pros and cons of keeping the plant.
3. **Drama :** Assign the following roles: Reporter, Mr. McGregor, Mrs Bear, Baby Bear, The Vine. Have the reporter interview all characters as if it’s a live newscast.

Pg 2&3: Read the two different points of views and compare the concerns and opinions to the comments and lists made by the students.

“A Growing Menace”

What do you think about the statement made by Mr. Wolfy Lupus “Anything we don’t understand is dangerous”? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Have you ever been afraid of something you don’t understand? How did you react?

Mr McGregor said “This plant is unfair competition. It could produce more beans than my whole field”. What do you think about this statement? How do you feel when you are competing for something? When you win? When you don’t win? How do you act?

“There’s Richness in Diversity”

What do you think this headline means?

Diversity in culture – our world contains people from different cultures and religions. Discuss some of the ways cultures are different or the same.

Diversity in plants and animals – there is a variety of species and life forms in our world. Many of the plants and animals could hold the cure for illnesses.

Hetty Henny states “ Being new and different doesn’t necessarily mean that something is bad.” Do you agree with this opinion? Why or why not?

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Health connection: Do you know any medicines that come from plants? What kinds of illnesses are cured by medicine? Have you ever taken medicine?

World Hunger and famine

Discussion questions: How does our food get from the farm to our table? What is hunger? Why is there hunger in the world? We know there is hunger also in North America but let's explore developing countries in the world, and the hunger problem. What are the names of these developing countries? Where are they on a map?

Writing: Make a list of the types of food you see in our grocery stores or markets. Many developing countries do not have the choices we have. What do children in these countries eat? Compare their meals to your meals. Make a menu for a typical North American dinner and a typical meal eaten by a child in a developing country. How are they different?

Pg 4&5: International News/Sports

Who is Mr Gepetto? Where do you think Pinocchio is? What questions would you ask the neighbours to help you find Mr Gepetto and Pinocchio? Have you ever lost something? How did you feel? Did you find it?

Writing: The children of the town have taken up a collection to offer as a reward for anyone who can provide news of their beloved toy maker and his puppet. Make a sign to advertise this reward.

Sports: Unusual Race

The tortoise and the hare are competing in a race. Who do you think the winner will be? Why? What is a Poll?

Back Page

Choose your favourite fairytale character and imagine what type of job they ended up with. Create an ad for this job. Some characters you might consider:

- Little Red Riding Hood
- The Three Bears
- Jack (from Jack and the Beanstalk)
- Little Red Hen
- Ugly Duckling
- Snow White
- Pinocchio
- Goldilocks

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Back to the main story : Disappearance of Boy Linked to Mystery Plant

Where is Jack? Do you think the vine should be chopped down? Why? Or why not? Where does the vine lead?

L. Feline and Hetty Henny still disagree about the safety of the vine. L. Feline blames the vine for all the bad things that are happening, stating the vine is unsafe for children. What other structures might be unsafe to climb? On the other side, Hetty explains “It is a reminder that giants live on our planet, sometimes in distant places like towering redwoods and majestic sequoias. “ Where do these trees grow? She feels the beanstalk might be Jack’s only way back home and doesn’t think it should be cut down. What do you think?

Are you afraid of some things that are bigger than you? Are you afraid of anything that’s smaller than you?

Other books by Alma Flor Ada:

- *Dear Peter Rabbit*
- *Yours Truly, Goldilocks*
- *With Love, Little Red Hen*