

BEAR TALES

adapted and illustrated by Vlasta van Kampen

Genre: Picture book, fiction

Themes: Storytelling

Fictional stories about bears

Legends & folktales

Community

Math

Relationships

Problem solving

fiction vs reality

Suitable for: Grades 1 – 4

Bear Takes

This book brings together three short stories about bears from around the world. The author retells the tales with humor and vivid illustrations that highlight central bear characters.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY IDEAS ...

... are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text. Comprehension activities:

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text

BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK:

Activities to build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and to establish prior knowledge and interest and develop predictions of what the text will be about.

A1. Discuss with students the difference between fiction and non-fiction, or not real and real.

Give examples, showing the cover of *Bear Tales* (fiction) and a page from a science book with a photograph or illustration of a bear (non-fiction). Ask questions like:

- Would a real bear wear overalls?
- Would a real bear be able to talk like a human?

In fiction, the imagination can create a story where anything happens. Looking at the cover of *Bear Tales*, each of the three pictures tells a different story about fictional bears.

- What is each bear doing that tells us these stories are created by our imagination?
- What other ideas do you have when you look at the pictures on the contents page?

A2. Using a globe or map of the world, help students to find the place where each story originated as noted on the contents page.

Stories come from all over the world, but the earliest tales were not written down. How do you think we know so many stories now when many of them were never written down?

Share a story you have heard passed down through your family. Who told you the story? Who did that person learn the story from?

These stories about bears were told aloud again and again over many years. The writer, Vlasta van Kampen, decided to write them down and adapted them as “three treasured stories.” Why do you think the writer called them “treasured” stories?

WHILE READING THE BOOK

Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers’ reactions.

B1. While you read to the students, set up a focus for something to be discussed later. Select one of the three stories and read it aloud several times before taking up follow-up ideas.

For example, in *Bear and Pig Went to Market*:

- While I read this story, keep track in your heads how many nickles Bear makes at the market.

An example from *Why Bear Stole the Moon*:

- In this story many animals have a problem with something Bear did. I am going to stop partway through and ask what your plan would be to solve the problem, and then we will hear what the animals did. (Stop at page 18, after the first sentence.)

An example from *Two Lazy Bears*:

- Even though the two bears in this story are always arguing, listen for things that tell you they are friends.

AFTER READING THE BOOK

Activities to inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

C1. *Bear and Pig Went to Market*: Set up props for the students and have them act out the parts in pairs using different facial expressions, voices and gestures while the story is reread aloud.

C2. *Why Bear Stole the Moon*: With the class, make a list of all the animals that want the moon back and what they like doing when the moon is shining.

Ask the students to select one animal each, group themselves according to the animals they have chosen and move about the room as those animals, with a “moon” shining brightly. (This is more effective if suitable background music can be played.)