

Mr McGee and the Biting Flea

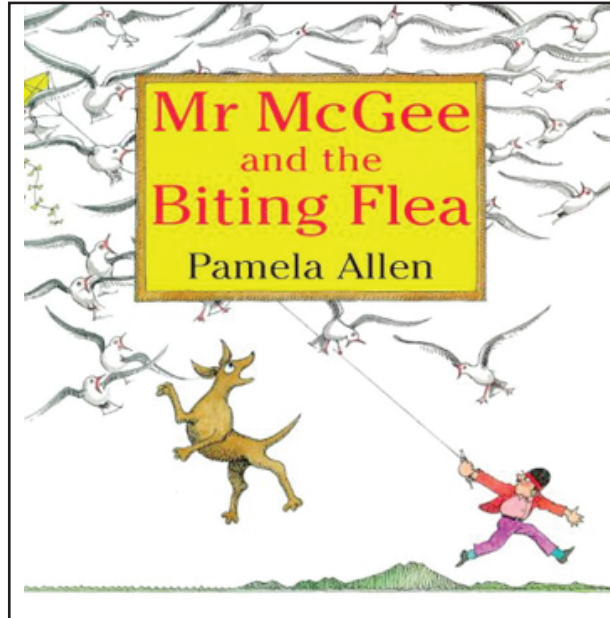
by Pamela Allen

TEACHERS' NOTES by LINNET HUNTER

Outline

Mr McGee returns in a rollicking boisterous romp, as he searches for an elusive biting flea. The sounds, rhymes and rhythms of this story both carry along and hold a young audience who will join enthusiastically in the howls of Mr McGee and beg for a re-reading. It lends itself to many word activities and movement games.

Suggested Grade Levels: K-3



LIBRARY

Displays

Owww/ooooo/eeeeee in giant cut-out letters along the library wall.

Kite and backscratcher hanging from ceiling.

Library Classes

Pamela Allen noise competition using sounds from her books.

Library Skills

Biting insects. Which creatures bite and sting?
Where are the books on these creatures found?
Which plants repel fleas? Examples are wormwood and other herbs.

Book Week Activities

Reeling and writhing demonstration.
Kite-making.

Related Titles

Search **The Source Books & Authors** Database under the subjects:
'Fleas' and 'Figurative language'

and for other books about Mr McGee
search **Series and sequels** under McGee

Refine your searches by Age level using a median age.
For example... 6-6.

Other titles by this author

Search the Books and authors database under Pamela Allen.

Learning Outcomes

Level 1

Interact with teachers, peers and known adults in both structured and informal classroom activities dealing briefly with familiar topics.

Draw on implicit knowledge of the linguistic structures and features of English when expressing ideas and information and interpreting spoken texts.

Level 2

Interact in more confident and extended ways in structured and spontaneous school situations.

Level 1

Demonstrate emerging awareness and use of symbols and conventions when constructing meaning from text. Recognise and use a range of cues to predict meaning in text.

Level 2

Recognise and interpret basic linguistic structures and features of texts.

Level 1

Experiment with, and practise ways of, representing ideas and information using written symbols. Show awareness that written language is used by people to convey meanings to others.

Level 2

Spell a number of words conventionally and attempt to spell unfamiliar words by using a range of strategies.

Level 2

Control most basic features of written language and experiment with some organisational and linguistic features of different text types.

Speaking and Listening

- What is a flea? How big is a flea? Where might they live? What do they like to bite? Have you ever been bitten by a flea? a wasp? a bee? What did it feel like? Which other creatures bite and sting?
- Share the poem *The Triantiwontigongolope* by C.J. Dennis (the complete poem is on **The Source**). Draw a picture of this crazy bug.
- Talk to the class about the time you were stung by something (for example, a spider, a jellyfish).

Reading

- How can you tell which parts of the story should be read loudly and which softly?
- *Cloze activities could be devised using the text from this title to focus on aspects of spelling and grammar.*
- Look at all the pairs of words Pamela Allen has used to describe Mr McGee's movements. What do you notice about them? How are they the same? How are they different?
- Brainstorm pairs of words to describe our movements if you had been bitten by an unusual insect (for example, the tse-tse fly that carries sleeping sickness).
- Make a list of words on the board that rhyme with flea.
- Read the other Mr McGee books. What might his next adventure be?

Writing

- In pairs take turns to make a soft but unusual sound. Your partner has to turn the sound into writing, so that a third person could make your sound.
- Make a large poster of your favourite sound and display it in the room.
- Find some tongue-twisters and practise saying them to a friend.

*A flea and a fly in a flue
Were entrapped, so what could they do?
Said the fly, 'Let us flee!'
Said the flea, 'Let us fly!'
So they flew through a flaw in the flue!*

- What are some other words that sound the same and are spelt differently? Can you use them to make a joke?
- Write a limerick beginning: There once was a man and a flea ... (for how to write a limerick see *Troy Thompson's Excellent Poetry Book* - Assignment IV).
- Write some new titles using rhyming words, for example, Mr McShae and the Horrible Day.

- What do you like about these illustrations? What do you dislike? What do you notice especially about them?
- How many characters are there in the story? How many are drawn? Why might Pamela Allen have chosen to do this?
- Look at Pamela Allen's other books. What are some similarities between them? Look at movement/standing still; single image/many images; realistic/cartoon style; colour/white space.
- Pamela Allen has said that she likes to show the action of a story. How does she do this?
- Do some simple cartooning, for example, flip books/rotating discs.
- Invite a cartoonist to your school.

Learning Outcomes

Level 1

Respond to visual art works in a personal way.

Level 2

Respond to art works giving reasons for preferences.

Level 3

Explore and use several art elements and use specific skills, techniques and processes appropriate to the visual arts form.

DRAMA and DANCE

- What sort of movements did Mr McGee make when he was trying to find the flea? In small groups create six movements from the story that you can then join together to make an 'itchy and scratchy' dance.
- How do dogs and other animals scratch themselves? Choose an animal and take turns showing the class your movement.
- Statues: run with your kite on the beach and freeze in a statue pose when the music stops.
- Learn the song 'Cat's Got Fleas' from the CD *Six* (ABC Productions/Polygram, 1989).
- What kind of music goes with this story? Experiment with percussion instruments to provide a soundtrack to a reading of it.

Level 1

Draw upon a play and imagination in drama activities.

Use basic elements of drama such as role, movement, focus and language, and explore them in dramatic activities.

Share drama with others.