

# The TRUE STORY of MARY Who Wanted to Stand on Her Head

## Teacher's Notes

This thought-provoking story is about a girl who is a little unusual. Mary has the urge to stand on her head. Her parents try everything to get her to live a normal life standing up. They send her to a doctor who tries to get her to stand upright by placing her feet in a locked box and tying helium balloons to her hands. The doctor suggests to the parents that they take her out to the desert and leave her there until she learns to stay on her feet. After a while her parents go out to get her and bring her back to attend school. Because she doesn't obey the rule of 'never stand on your head' she is expelled. Luckily Hugh the camel is waiting outside and he takes her back to the desert where she makes new friends, a large lizard Mary called Mister and a charming marsupial mouse named Edwina-Marie. Mary's life feels complete with her new soul mates.

*The True Story of Mary Who Wanted to Stand on Her Head* looks at non-conformity and being true to yourself.

## ACTIVITIES

Use these questions in a whole-class discussion

- In what style is this story written?
- Discuss the use of rhyme in this story. Does it make the story fun?
- Look at the language used in this book and talk about it.
- Was Mary worried about always wanting to stand on her head?
- Did Mary appear to be upset about leaving her parents and going to the desert?
- Do you think Mary was happy with her life before she went to the desert?
- Was Mary worried about being different?
- Find portions that you found humorous and state why you chose these particular parts.

## WRITING

- Make a list of all the unusual words in the book, for example, *incongruousness*, *alluded*, *chortled*. Ask students to find out the meanings of these words and use them in sentences of their own.
- Choose one page and write about it in detail, referring to both the words and the pictures separately. Indicate why you chose that particular page.
- Finish this sentence: *The True Story of Mary Who Wanted to Stand on Her Head* shows us ...
- Write about something you may do or like that other people may think is peculiar.
- Write a review of the picture book *The True Story of Mary Who Wanted to Stand on Her Head* for your local newspaper.
- Brainstorm with friends words that describe Mary, write a poem about her.
- Write about someone you know that has something unique about them. Does this make them special to you?

## SPEAKING/LISTENING

- Is there something in your family—a trait—that you have. What is it?
- Sometimes it is hard to fit in. How can you make someone feel comfortable?
- Talk about people and their differences. How can we accept people the way they are?

Talk about:

- being happy
- perspective
- messages contained in this book
- the philosophy of life.

