



Teacher Guide
for
Firefighters In The Dark
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Summary

A little girl is lying in her bed at night, listening to the sirens from the fire station near her house. Each time she hears the sirens, she imagines what the firefighters might be doing – putting out a fire at a castle that was started by a dragon, dousing a blaze ignited by a too-hot chili pepper in a Mexican garden, rescuing a little boy who was jumping on his bed and flew all the way to Pluto. At the end, the little girl imagines that the fire fighters have come to take her with them on a night-time adventure – putting out the fire in the stars.

Teaching Ideas

Firefighters in the Dark provides an opportunity to talk with students about imagination and the senses. The child in the story can hear the sound of the fire sirens, and she imagines all kinds of adventures that the firefighters are having. Some of these things are clearly fantastical – like jumping all the way to Pluto or driving a fire truck into the sky. This is a chance for students to talk about the power of imagination, about things that are true and things that aren't, and about the way that the things we see, hear, touch, taste and smell can trigger our imaginations.

Comprehension Questions

1. What sound does the little girl hear when she lies in bed at night?
2. How did the dragon set the table on fire?
3. What are the firefighters' names?
4. What started the fire in Mexico?
5. What is an ember?
6. What kind of food does Penelope like to eat?
7. What happens to the boy who was jumping on his bed?
8. Why does King come visit the little girl at the end of the story?

Discussion Questions

1. What sounds can you hear at night when you're trying to fall asleep? How do those sounds make you feel?
2. The firefighters are heroes to the girl in the story. Who are some of your heroes? Why?
3. Have you ever been to a fire station? What did you see there?

4. Do you think all the stories that the girl tells really happened?
5. Are they all possible? Does a story need to be true to be a good story?

Class Activities

1. Make A Character

Read the descriptions of the firefighters on pages 9 and 19 of the book. Point out some of the details you learn from the text (Almondine likes zucchini) and details you learn from the pictures (Almondine wears her hair in a long braid). Next, ask students to create their own firefighter character using the sheet at the end of this guide. Help them develop details by asking questions. What is your firefighter's name? What does he or she look like? What does he or she like to eat? What does he or she like to do for fun? Where does she or he live? What is his or her favorite part of being a firefighter?

Encourage students to come up with as many details as they can. Then have them illustrate their description. A worksheet for this assignment is at the back of the packet.

2. Community Map

You Will Need:

- A map of the neighborhood around your school, printed out from Google Maps.
- Enough telephone books for each student or each table.

Ask students to brainstorm about other kinds of workers they see in their community. What kinds of people work near your school? Help them think of jobs like firefighter, police officer, garbage collector, mail carrier, librarian, doctor, nurse, recreation center director, as well as people who might work at local businesses.

Show students how to use a telephone book to look up addresses. Show them the government listings at the front of telephone book that show where police and fire stations and recreation centers are.

Using Google Maps, print out a map of the area around your school. Then, using the phone book, have students locate these different workers on the map. Where is the nearest fire station? Where is the nearest police station? Where is the nearest park or hospital? Make a map of your school community and the people who work nearby.

3. Metaphors and Similes:

There are many metaphors and similes in *Firefighters in the Dark*. The fire engine purrs like a big red cat. The firefighter are strong as tigers. Embers are fire seeds that grow into fire flowers.

Explain to students that a simile makes a comparison between two things that are not alike in most ways but are similar in one important way. For example, both things might be blue, or soft, or angry. Similes usually use the words “like” or “as.” Give them some examples, e.g. quiet as a mouse, solid as a rock, strong as an ox.

Explain that a metaphor also compares two things, but unlike a simile, the metaphor says that something *is* something else. For example, “The fog is a creeping cat.”

Read *Firefighters in the Dark* and ask the students to point out the similes and metaphors they hear.

Now ask the students to write a description of someone they admire using metaphors and similes.

4. Odes

An ode is a poem written in praise of something. Ask your students to choose someone or something they like as much as the little girl in the story likes firefighters and write an ode to it. In their ode, they will describe what is special about that person or thing, and how it makes them feel. Here is an example of an ode written in a group.

Ode to Cheetahs

By 2nd and 3rd graders at Monticello School in Tracy, California

They run as fast as a swordfish can swim.
They're the fastest land animals.
They have beautiful skin.
They have spots on them.
They have yellow skin and black markings.
Cheetahs make me happy
because they're interesting
because they're camouflaged
because they have brown eyes and gold.
Cheetahs make me unhappy
because my teacher won't let me
bring one to school.

5. Sound Map and Sensory Writing

You Will Need:

- A notebook or clipboard with paper for each student
- A pencil for each student
- An outdoor place where students can sit – the yard will work if other classes are not having recess.

Talk to your students about the senses. Ask them what the senses are and help them come up with a definition and a list of the five senses. Ask them what sense the child in *Firefighters in the Dark* is using (her hearing) when she is lying in bed. Ask them what sounds they hear when they're lying in bed, and what those sounds make them think about or feel.

Take your students outside and have them sit a little ways away from each other. Have them put an X in the middle of the page or notebook. That X represents them. Instruct them to spend 1 minute listening with their eyes closed. After one minute, have them draw pictures or symbols on the map that represent the sounds they hear and where they are in relation to the X. They can draw pictures of what the sound is (a bird), symbols that represent what it sounds like (wavy lines, a musical note, a lightning bolt), or spell out the sound as they hear it (“caw,” “tweet,” “vrooom,” “bang!”)

Give them five minutes to listen and write. Afterwards, have them label their map with their name, date, and location.

When they are done, ask them what it felt like to sit quietly and listen.

- Could you identify all the sounds you heard?
- Would you hear different sounds if you were somewhere else?
- Would you hear different sounds at night? In another season?

Then ask them to write a poem about the sounds they heard in which they describe what each sound was like, what it made them think about, and how it made them feel. Encourage them to use their imaginations – a motorcycle engine might make them think of monsters; the wind might sound like talking.

Worksheet for Sound Map Poem

What I heard:

What it sounded like:

What it made me think about:

How it made me feel:

Write or draw your own firefighter adventure.



*How did the fire start?
How did the firefighters
put it out?*

Write a neighborhood adventure.



Think of another kind of person who works in your neighborhood, like a police officer, garbage collector, mail carrier, or librarian and write an adventure that person might have while doing their job.

Invent your own firefighter.



*What is your firefighter's name?
What does he or she look like?
What does he or she like to eat?
What does he or she like to do for fun?
Where does she or he live?
What is his or her favorite part of
being a firefighter?*