

There's a Literature Book in the Science Lab!

• Pacing Guide & Related Activities •

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

Session One: Introduction to Unit

The Tarantula in My Purse, Chapters 1-4

Instruct the students read Chapters 1-4 or read these chapters to them. Conduct a class discussion using the following questions (these questions may be used as "lit log" prompts):

1. What do you think is the most unusual name in these chapters? Why is it strange? What is the weirdest name you have ever heard given to a person or a pet?
2. Would your mother allow you to keep wild pets in the house? Why or why not?
3. What are six advantages for having wild animals of pets and six disadvantages. (It is possible that the same statements may appear on both lists.)

Session Two: Fun and Games

The Tarantula in My Purse, Chapters 5-10

Inform the students that they will need to read chapters 5-10 to obtain some information for today's fun activity. Allow twenty minutes of reading time.

Paper Bag Skits: Group the students into four or five teams. Give each group a paper bag filled with about ten items you collected before class that could be used as props in a play (examples: baseball cap, basket, comic book, coffee cup, Frisbee, jump rope, scarf, teddy bear, umbrella and wooden spoon). Give the students fifteen minutes to create a three to five minute skit with the title "A Day in the Life of the George Family." The teams are allowed to use all of the props, every team member must participate and at least

three facts from chapters 1-10 must be revealed in the performance.

Session Three: Investigative Reading

The Tarantula in My Purse, Chapters 11-18

Introduce the chapters by telling the students that each chapter could stand alone as a short story. List the following animals on the board: Bat, Boa Constrictor, Chickadee, Crow, Mouse, Robin, Skunk, Tarantula and Turtle. Inform the students that these animals will appear in today's chapters. Tell the students that after they have read the assigned chapters they are to select one of the following activities. Students may work in groups and need to be prepared to share their findings.

1. Choose one of the listed animals and research it in a reference book. List ten facts of interest concerning the animal.
2. Create a Pro and Con list concerning the desirability of one of these animals as a house pet. There should be ten items in each list.
3. Compare and contrast a bat to a boa constrictor or a tarantula to a turtle. List five ways they are alike and five ways they are different.

Session Four: Plenty of Projects

The Tarantula in My Purse, Chapters 19-21

Assign the last three chapters of the book. Discuss why the author may have chosen "The Bullfrog Who Was a Prince" as the final chapter in the book. (A bullfrog scares away her daughter's boyfriend.) Allow students to choose one or more of the activities below. Have construction paper, poster board, makers, old magazines, scis-

sors, etc., available for student use. Inform the students that they will have to present their project and defend its suitability as a culminating activity. Evaluation will be on both the product and presentation.

- Illustrate a scene from one of the books.
- Review *The Tarantula in My Purse* and make a list of as many of the 172 wild animals as you can find.
- What do you think was the most unusual name the George family gave an animal? Why was it strange? What is the weirdest name you have ever heard given to a person or a pet?
- Create a collage displaying as many of the animals found in the book as you can.

Session Five: Book Talk

There's an Owl in the Shower, Chapters 1-5

Introduce *There's an Owl in the Shower* to the students. Explain that the book was based on the author's experiences with the owl, Yammer, in *The Tarantula in My Purse*. Discuss how it is possible to take a simple event, add a major conflict, include complex characters and have an interesting story. Explain to the students that the following questions cover the six strategies for reading. Read the chapters and discuss the questions. Visualize: How do you explain the characters and setting in your mind. Who and what do they remind you of? Predict: What do you think will happen next? Connect: Can you think of situations in our community similar to the one like the logging industry and the spotted owl in Northern California?

Question: What are the questions you have concerning the first five chapters?

Clarify: Do you understand what has happened? (Do not be afraid to reread.) **Evaluate:** What do you think of the story? What is your opinion of the author's writing style?

Session Six: Owls

There's an Owl in the Shower, Chapters 6-8

The students will learn some interesting facts about the spotted owl as they read chapters six through eight. This is an appropriate time to conduct a mini-research activity. Two Internet sites

the students may wish to use are: www.owls.org and www.owlpages.com. Have the students research a specific type of owl (example: Bared Owl, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Screech Owl and Snowy Owl). Students should record at least ten facts about the owl they selected, including information about appearance, habitat and diet. An illustration of the owl should be included. Students are to use their research and write a descriptive paragraph that would describe an owl to someone who has never seen one before.

Session Seven: Animals and Art-Water Colors and Haiku

There's an Owl in the Shower, Chapters 9-12

After the students read chapters 9-12, discuss that writers, like scientists, are usually keen observers who record their observations. Whereas a scientist may record data, an author writes a story. There are also other methods people use to share their observations. They may write poetry, take photographs or paint pictures. In fact, the author, Jean Craighead George, is the illustrator of some of her books. For this lesson, students should write a haiku and illustrate it. Define haiku as a type of Japanese poetry that "paints" a picture of nature with words. A haiku is a three-line poem. The first line contains five syllables, the second, seven and the third five. Supply the students with watercolor paints, brushes and watercolor paper. Display the illustrated poems on a bulletin board.

Example:

Lovely, lonely bird
Alone in the cold, dark woods
Come and be my friend.

Session Eight: Economics and Ecology

There's an Owl in the Shower, Chapters 13-15

After the students have read chapters 13-15, ask them the following question: "The conflict in this book is the dispute between human industry and

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nature conversation. Can the two co-exist?" Point out that many such issues depend on a person's point of view. Tell the students that they are going to be assigned to a specific group that would have an interest in the logging industry. Pass out prepared cards to each of the students. (There may be duplicate occupations.) Each card will have one of the following listed on it: Lumberjack, Fisherman, Lumber Salesman, Consumer of Wood Furniture, Hunter, Environmentalist and Carpenter. The students may work in groups or individually. They are to generate a list of at least ten "costs" and "benefits" logging would have on their particular occupation or recreational activity. Define "cost" as a loss or penalty incurred in gaining something. Define "benefit" as to be useful or profitable. Explain that "costs" and "benefits" are not always monetary in nature. Conduct a class discussion by comparing and contrasting the ideas the students generated.

Session Nine: Review and Evaluation

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There's an Owl in the Shower, Chapters 16-17

After the students read the last two chapters of *There's an Owl in the Shower*, discuss the following questions:

1. Leon makes the statement that the process of clear-cutting a forest is the beginning of a "domino effect." What did he mean?
2. Did your opinion of Leon change toward the end of the book? If so, how?
3. Do you think the book ended happily? Why or why not?

Tell the students that the concluding activity of this unit will be a test. However, this test will be one that they make rather than one that they take! The criteria for their work is as follows:

- The content must deal with the two books, *The Tarantula in My Purse* and *There's an Owl in the Shower*.
- The test should be neat and legible.
- The test should have at least twenty questions and at least two parts. True and False, Fill in the Blank, Short Essay and Matching are examples of methods that may be used.
- An Answer Key must be provided.

The students exchange their work with another class member upon completion of making the test. The other student then takes the test. Each student is to grade the test taken on its fairness and how well it meets the criteria.



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