

# For Goodness SNAKES— Read!

• Keep 'em Reading •

by | Carol Thompson

## A Snake-themed Reading Incentive Program

### It Started with a Bet

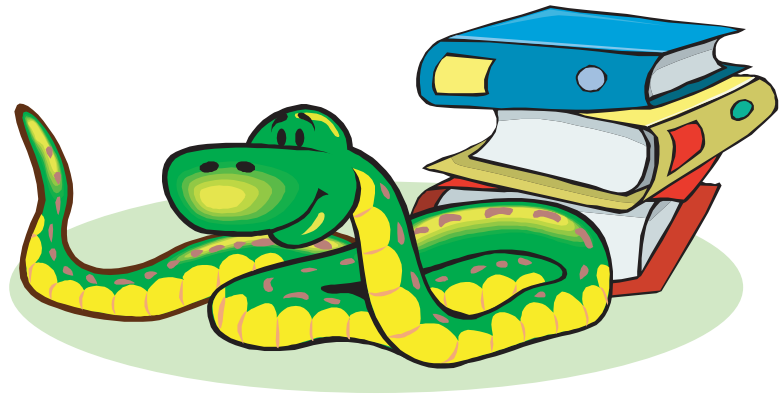
As a media specialist, I am in constant search of ways to motivate boys to read. Several years ago, I hit jackpot when a young student jokingly told me that he would finish that chapter book I suggested when I held his snake. What he didn't realize was that you should not challenge me with a bet—especially when it comes to getting students to read!

So the bet was on: I held the snake, and he had to finish reading the book. Although neither was too happy about their chore, we both held up our end of the bargain. The main point, however, is that by getting to know the student and his interests, I was able to later point out books that might be more suitable to him. Consequently, he began to enjoy books a little more, although my fondness of snakes never did grow. And, the idea for a new motivational party emerged: Just like I told the student, “For Goodness SNAKES—Just Read!”

### A Popular Theme

With my idea in mind and a newfound fire afoot, I got busy. A few years later, this is still one of our more popular themes, and this is how we do it. As always, the first thing we do while planning is pull books on the theme. We make a “slimy” display that copies our theme title, “For Goodness SNAKES—Read!” Around the display we exhibit all of our books that go along with snakes and reptiles and other related materials. I try to pull all genres to reach every age and interest. (See some suggested snake fiction, nonfiction, and Web sites in “Resources” on page 3.)

Joint planning between me, my clerk, and the other teachers helps to narrow down which activities we will do in the media center. In our resource file we keep tons of other activities that



teachers can access at their discretion. We have conducted this unit several times and have varied it slightly each time.

### Grade Levels, Points and Objectives

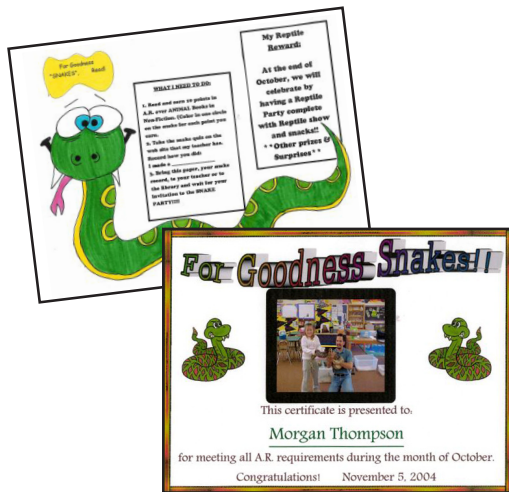
While this unit can be accommodated for any grade level, I have found to have the most fun and participation with grade three through five students. While in the media center, students are exposed to snake-related activities that cover objectives that span across the curriculum and take place both indoors and outdoors.

To be invited to the Snake Party at the end of the month, students have to earn it. For example Kindergartners may have to read twenty books at home and have appropriate documentation to show for it. Fourth grade students may have to accumulate ten points in the Accelerated Reader program on their reading level. Other appropriate reading goals can be established based on the individual student, class, or school. The media specialist should keep in mind to always make the goal obtainable. The object is to have students motivated enough to read but able to successfully reach the goal too. During the month while students are working independently on their reading goals, we are having “Snakey” activities in the media center. (An abbreviated list of Snake Activities is on page 2.)

## Keep 'em Reading

### Snake Party

At the end of the month we celebrate those students who have reached their goal. Consider throwing a “For Goodness SNAKES—Read!” party. We go all out for these parties because that is what motivates the students for the next party. After assembling the guest list, each student received a “Reptile RSVP Invitation” to the party. According to the theme of the month and the number of participants, I decide whether I want to break the parties into grade levels or not.



### Bring in an Expert

As part of the celebration, we invited Rick Bradley, from the Georgia Reptile and Amphibian Rescue Effort, and some of his “reptilians” to do a school show. He brought snakes, turtles, and other reptiles. Each child got to hold certain animals. The six-foot-long boa constrictor was students’ favorite. We take group and individual pictures for the school scrapbook, and each student is given a certificate to commemorate this special event.

Students work extremely hard. We have always had lots of success with our incentive parties.

### Snake Activities

- Include a snake fact or joke of the day to be read by students during the morning announcements.
- Read aloud books in the library.
- Have students go on related Web scavenger hunts (See the Web sites in “Resources” on page 3).

- Assign writing activities. Subjects might include “My Hisssssstory ...” or “The Day the Snake Got Loose in the Pet Store.”
- Create a Venn diagram to compare/contrast snake species.
- Consider going on a nature hike in search of reptiles.
- Create a geography activity where students map the biomes and locations of various snake species.
- Slippery Snake Cake (See the recipe and picture on page 4.)
- Conduct a Student Library Hunt finding fiction and nonfiction literature about snakes/reptiles.
- Expand your theme beyond snakes and host turtle or toad races (after which math skills can be used to measure distance, speed, etc.).

### Snake Jokes

What do snakes and George Washington have in common?

*They're both hissssssstory.*

What did the naughty little diamondback say to his big sister?

*“Don't be such a rattle-tail!”*

What kind of snake can drive cars?

*The Ana-Honda*

Why can't you play jokes on snakes?

*Because you can't pull their legs.*

What do you get when you cross a snake and a kangaroo?

*A jump rope!*



What do you call a snake without any clothes on?  
*Snaked.*

Why did the snake cross the road?  
*To get to the other sssssside.*

### Snake-themed Menu

- Snake Dogs (regular hot dogs with sliced black olives for eyes)
- RattleBurgers (hamburgers)
- Cobra Casserole (any casserole)
- Snakeskin Scale Pizza (regular pizza with scattered corn flakes on top)
- Snake Eggs (scrambled eggs dyed green or hardboiled eggs dyed green)
- Slithering Spaghetti
- Snakes on a Skewer (chicken meat on a kabob stick)
- Snake Venom Punch (green juice drink)
- Gummy snakes and snake eggs (jelly beans) for dessert

## Snake Resources

### Books

#### Fiction

- *Baseball, Snakes, and Summer Squash: Poems About Growing Up* by Donald Graves. Wordsong/Boyd's Mills Press, 1996.
- *Box Turtle at Long Pond* by William George. Greenwillow Books, 1989.
- *Cam Jansen & the Scary Snake Mystery* by David A. Adler. Penguin, 1999.
- *The Jimmy's Boa series* by Trinka Hakes Noble. Dial.
- *The Rattlesnake Who Went to School* by Craig Kee Strete. Putnam, 2004.
- *Ruler of the Courtyard* by Rukhsana Khan. Viking, 2003.
- *A Snake Mistake* by Mavis Smith. HarperCollins, 1991.
- *The Snake's Tales* by Marguerite W. Davol. Orchard Books, 2002.
- *Snakes!* by David T. Greenburg. Little, Brown and Company, 2004.
- *Snakes and Ladders* by Michael Morpurgo. Crabtree Publishing Company, 2000.

- *Turtle & Snake Go Camping* by Kate Spohn. Viking, 2000.
- *Verdi* by Janell Cannon. Harcourt, 1997.

#### Nonfiction

- *Amazing Snakes!* by Sarah L. Thomson. HarperCollins, 2006.
- *Gliding Garter Snakes* by Buffy Silverman. Lerner Publications, 2007.
- *Slinky, Scaly, Slithery Snakes* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent. Walker & Co., 2000.
- *Snake Charmer* by Ann Whitehead Nagda. Henry Holt & Company, 2002.
- *Snakes! Strange and Wonderful* by Laurence Pringle. Boyd's Mills Press, 2004.
- *Snakes* by Adrienne Mason. Kids Can Press, 2005.
- *Snakes* by Susan Schafer. Benchmark Books, 2003.
- *Snakes Are Hunters* by Patricia Lauber. HarperCollins, 1989.
- *Snakes* by Patricia Brennan Demuth. Grosset & Dunlap, 1993.
- *Snakes* by Seymour Simon. HarperTrophy, 1994.

### Web Sites

The Amazing World of Reptiles  
[library.thinkquest.org/04oct/00246/](http://library.thinkquest.org/04oct/00246/)

Everything You Wanted to Know About Snakes  
[library.thinkquest.org/5409/](http://library.thinkquest.org/5409/)

Slithering Snakes  
[library.thinkquest.org/CR0213183/](http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0213183/)

Snakes!  
[library.thinkquest.org/J0111684/](http://library.thinkquest.org/J0111684/)

The Ten Deadliest Snakes  
[library.thinkquest.org/05aug/01812/](http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/01812/)

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*Carol Thompson, a media specialist in Rockmart, Georgia shares her passion for literacy with her students and community at the same elementary school in which she attended. Author of four books from the Mr. Wiggle series and countless magazine articles, Carol strives to make reading fun. Please feel free to e-mail her at cdthomp@bellsouth.net.*

### Snake Cake Recipe

#### What You Need:

- two baked ring or Bundt cakes
- one baked rectangular sheet
- candy for decorations (fruit roll ups for tongue, yellow M&Ms for scales, and gumballs for eyes)
- frosting (green for snake cake; white for base cake)

#### What You Do:

Frost the rectangular sheet cake with white (or another color) frosting. Cut the Bundt cakes in half and arrange them in a snake-like pattern on top of the base cake. Carve off some of one end of the snake to make the nose. Frost the snake pieces together with green frosting. Add the gumballs to make the eyes. Use knife to shape the fruit roll up to make the tongue then add it to the nose. Decorate the rest of the snake with yellow M&Ms to look like scales. Be creative!

Alternative: Take the picture to a bakery, and have them do it for you!

