

Beyond the Page: The Web Files

Subject: Language Arts

Running time: 17 minutes

Objectives

The student will:

- gain a deeper understanding of the book *The Web Files*, written by Margie Palatini and illustrated by Richard Egelski;
- be motivated to read more books and find out more about the author, illustrator, and subject matter; and
- learn more about the career of a detective.

Synopsis of the Book

This tongue-twisting tale, a take-off on the 1960s TV show *Dragnet*, draws on nursery rhymes, puns, multiple-meaning words, show tunes, and other wordplay. When someone pilfers a peck of perfect purple almost-pickled peppers, along with a tub of tart tasty ta-mah-toes and a load of luscious lettuce, it's up to Ducktective Web and his partner to track down the culprit. It's a hard case to quack, but the web-footed gumshoes soon toss peppers, lettuce, and tomatoes together to make a salad. Then it's a cinch to nab the Dirty Rat who's lurching on the loot.

Synopsis of the Video

At the Beyond the Page Café, Today's Special is *The Web Files*, written by Margie Palatini and illustrated by Richard Egelski. Shelley, the Café's host and storyteller, reads the story aloud to young patrons as we view animated illustrations from the book. After the reading, the kids have an online chat with author Margie Palatini. Then they watch a video to learn "just the facts, ma'am" about real-life detective work.

Preview Questions/Discussions

1. See if you can say these sentences quickly: "If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, then how many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?" "Sally sells seashells down by the seashore." What makes these sentences hard to say?
2. What is a detective? What does a detective do to solve a case?
3. Before viewing the video, explain to students that in the 1960s there was a television show with a detective who wanted "just the facts, ma'am." Tell the class that in between each of the scenes was a musical bridge of "dum de dum dum."

Post-Viewing Questions

1. What makes this story funny?
2. Which characters in this story were already familiar to you? Where had you heard of these characters before?
3. What kinds of word games does the author play in this story? Point out some examples.
4. At the Beyond the Page Café, kids get information from books, videos, and the Internet. If you wanted to learn more about detectives and solving crimes, what media would you choose? Explain your choices.

Related Activities

1. Have students work in groups to choose two or more nursery rhymes or fairy tales to combine in one story, as Margie Palatini does in *The Web Files*. Group members should list the characters and events in each story and then work together to figure out how the characters and plots of the different tales might intertwine. Have them write and illustrate their tale.
2. Write the following on the chalkboard: phone _____ case; chalk _____ game; hot _____ collar; webbed _____ ball. Ask students to guess the missing word in the middle. This word forms a familiar phrase or compound with both the first word and the last. For example: "Phone book case= phone book + bookcase." (Answer key: book, board, dog, foot). Next, encourage students to create some missing-word puzzles of their own. Have them exchange papers and solve classmates' puzzles.
3. Have students recall the online chat with Margie Palatini, author of *The Web Files*. Help students formulate their own questions for the author and for the illustrator, Richard Egelski. Encourage them to send their questions and comments to Palatini and Egelski at the following address:
Margie Palatini and Richard Egelski
c/o Hyperion Books for Children
114 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011-5690
4. Work with students to collect a list of homophones (words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings). Examples: pale/pail; week/weak. Have students write humorous riddles using homophones. Examples: (a) What did the shovel say to the bucket? Answer: Do you feel okay? You look pale. (b) How did you feel after working hard for seven days in a row? Answer: I felt week. Encourage students to illustrate their riddles with humorous cartoons.

Resources

Disney Educational Productions

www.Edustation.Disney.com

Additional information, including books, videos, and Web links.

Fun with Words!

www.library.thinkquest.org/j0111282/tqslap1=1&tqtime=0305

Spoonerisms, oxymorons, "stinky pinkies," word magnets much like the ones people have on their refrigerator doors, and much, much more.

Margie Palatini's Website

www.margiepalatini.com

This colorful, kid-friendly site provides the author's biography as well as information on her books and links to related Websites.

National Education Technology Standards Project

www.cnet.iste.org/index2.html

(Scroll to Search Lessons. Pull down Awesome Authors.)

Edwards, Pamela Duncan, *Some Smug Slug*; illustrated by Henry Cole (HarperCollins Children's Books, 1998).

Palatini, Margie, *Piggie Pie!*; illustrated by Howard Fine (Clarion Books, 1995).