

LENTIL

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By Robert McCloskey

Themes: Music

Grade Level: K-2

Running Time: 9 minutes, iconographic

SUMMARY

LENTIL, a story set in a small town, involves a boy named Lentil who, because he could not sing or whistle, learns to play the harmonica. Lentil played the harmonica all day long and took his instrument with him wherever he went.

One day the town started to buzz with word that Colonel Carter, the town's most well-known citizen, would be returning. Everyone was happy about this except Old Sneep, who was a very nasty man. All kinds of festivities were planned to welcome Colonel Carter home, including a brass band which would greet him at the train.

When the train finally arrived, the only sound heard in the town was the sound of Old Sneep sucking on a lemon. The sour man knew this would make the musicians pucker up and be unable to play their instruments. A very disappointed Colonel Carter stepped off the train. Rising to the occasion, Lentil puckered up, blew on his harmonica, and filled the air with lively music! The story ends with Colonel Carter and the rest of the town continuing the celebration—even to the delight of Old Sneep!

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about musical instruments.
- Children will explore problem-solving techniques.
- Children will investigate the advantages of determination and perseverance.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book, LENTIL, with children. Talk with children about their favorite instruments.

Ask:

- Why do you enjoy this instrument?
- If you can play this instrument, how did you feel when you first began playing?
- What do you need to do to play the instrument well?
- How would you begin teaching someone else to play this instrument?

Distribute rhythm band instruments to children. Allow time for children to explore each of them. Ask:

- Which instruments can make very loud sounds? soft sounds?
- Which instruments are easy to hold and play?
- Which are difficult to play?

If available, have children examine and try to play harmonicas. Help them determine how sounds are made.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Invite your school's music teacher, or a musician who is proficient at harmonica playing, to visit your classroom. In addition to demonstrating how the instrument is played, ask the musician to play some tunes that children are familiar with. Have children sing along with the harmonica. Later, talk with children about the ways the music made them feel. After the musician's visit, have children write thank-you notes, adding their own drawings of harmonicas to their messages.

Discuss the way Lentil used his harmonica to solve a serious problem. Ask:

- How do you think the Colonel would have felt

if everyone kept silent when he got off the train?

- What other things could Lentil have done to help with this problem?

Offer children the following hypothetical situations. Encourage children to investigate solutions to these problems, including possible musical solutions!

- If a friend needs cheering up and nothing anyone did seemed to work, what could you do?
- If you went to a friend's birthday party and everyone forgot to bring presents, what could you do for your friend?
- If a friend wanted to hear some music, and you didn't know how to play an instrument, what could you do?

Talk with children about skills they have developed that took practice and persistence. If children have difficulty calling up some of these experiences, help them by asking how they learned to tie their shoes, print with a pencil, play various sports, etc. As children talk, emphasize how determination and perseverance will help them gain skill in areas of interest to them.

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