

LESSON PLANS FOR EDUCATORS

Lesson Plan 1

RESCUE JOSH MCGUIRE by Ben Mikaelson
Hyperion, 1991: Hyperion Paperback, 1993
written by, California Young Reader Medal
Program Activity Packet 94-95.

SYNOPSIS

Josh McGuire is a lonely, unhappy boy. After his brother, Tye, died in an auto accident, his father began to drink heavily and to abuse Josh and his mother. Sam McGuire seems angry all the time, and it appears to Josh that his father thinks he is too short, too weak, and too stupid to do anything right. Hunting was one of the things Josh, his father, and Tye used to do together, but the pleasure has gone out of that, too. When his father kills a bear, Josh sees a cub nearby; he knows that they have shot its mother. Josh uses oatmeal cookies to lure the cub to follow him and names the bear Pokey.

Josh's father angrily denies that the cub belonged to the bear he shot and calls the game warden. Josh appeals to Otis Sinclair, a reclusive wildlife biologist, for help. Otis knows that the cub will be used for scientific experiments and will die if it is turned over to the game warden. Josh takes matters into his own hands. He rigs up a cage for Pokey from a milk crate and a piece of plywood and sets off for the high country on Tye's old motorcycle. In a note to his mother, he vows not to return until he can keep Pokey and nobody can hunt bears anymore.

Josh hadn't counted on a number of things. Mud Flap, his Border Collie, follows him, and they are caught in a sudden late spring blizzard of ferocious intensity. His disappearance has attracted nationwide media interest, and many people are on the lookout for him. Josh must display all his courage and ingenuity to survive the blizzard and a confrontation with an adult bear that critically injures Mud Flap.

When Josh appeals to Otis for help to get Mud Flap to a veterinarian, a patrol car follows the biologist to their rendezvous. As Otis leaves with the injured dog, Josh spots the headlights and thinks he has been betrayed. There is more trouble, and before his eventual rescue, Josh suffers a broken arm and other injuries.

As Josh is struggling to survive his wilderness adventure, his parents and Otis Sinclair are all learning more about themselves and each other. They, too, are touched by the circumstances and grow as a result of their challenges.

BOOKTALK

Josh McGuire hadn't wanted to go hunting in the first place. Ever since Josh's brother, Tye, was killed in an automobile accident, his dad has been drinking too much. Sam McGuire wants Josh to be a great outdoorsman, like Tye was. When Josh finds a bear cub lying next to the gut pile of the sow bear his father had shot the day before, he knows that his dad has killed its mother. Josh's father won't admit he shot a mother bear, and he insists that the cub be turned over to the game warden.

Josh decides it's up to him to rescue the cub. He takes off for the high country with the cub at night on Tye's old motorcycle, with his dog, Mud Flap, following. Josh has been camping before, and he figures he can survive for a while in the wilderness with a cave for shelter. But when a freak storm hits, dropping several feet of snow, Josh is stranded. Then the bear cub and Josh's dog break into the food bags, and Josh realizes

he may be in over his head. Nobody knows where to look for him, but it's time for somebody to rescue Josh McGuire!

Josh had made his decision and now he was going to follow through with it. No one was going to harm Pokey, not if he had any say in the matter. His father's killing of the cub's mother was bad enough, but to use the orphaned cub as a laboratory animal was more than Josh could endure. Taking the cub back to the high country wouldn't be too difficult; he could use his brother Tye's old motorcycle. Josh figured he would stay a while with the cub to help get it settled, then head on back down the mountain. What Josh hadn't planned on was a freak late spring snowstorm, a tumble on the cycle, his dog, Mud Flap, being critically injured by an adult bear, and the media getting involved. Is Josh in over his head? Will he and the bear cub survive their ordeal? Read *Rescue Josh McGuire* to find out.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT BEN MIKAELSEN

Ben Mikaelson was born in Bolivia. He moved to the United States when he was thirteen, and now lives with his wife in Bozeman, Montana. In 1984, Mikaelson adopted a 600-pound bear, Buffy, from a wild game farm. Mikaelson has helped the Fish and Game Department with orphaned bear cubs. His interests and activities often involve adventure in the outdoors. He has made a 1,600-mile cross-country horseback trip from Minnesota to Oregon, built a log house, and participated in parachute jumping and sled dog racing. While writing *Rescue Josh McGuire*, his first book, Mikaelson camped in the mountains, mapped Josh's journey, and drew on his experiences with Buffy and other orphaned bear cubs. Mikaelson won the International Reading Association's 1992 Award for a First Book in the Older Reader category and A Spur Award from the Western Writers of America for *Rescue Josh McGuire*.

INTO, THROUGH, AND BEYOND ACTIVITIES

INTO ACTIVITIES

Bear Essentials.

* Working in small groups, students should list all the words that they can think of that describe the characteristics and behavior of bears. Then have them watch a natural history film on bears.

- Is there anything they want to add or change on their list?

* Have the students compare the lists generated by the different groups and make a class chart of "Bear Essentials."

Survival Stories.

* Have students think of survival stories they have read (Robinson Crusoe, Hatched, Swiss Family Robinson, Lord of the Flies).

- What are the common elements that appear in these stories? Can the class come up with the important elements of the survival genre?

A Survival Pack.

* Divide the class into groups. Each group is to fill a survival pack with items that they believe would be the most important to have for survival in the wilderness area of Montana around Yellowstone National Park. They can carry only what will fit in the pack.

- Have the groups present their survival pack to the class. They should be prepared to explain and defend their choices of items.

Reference: "Using *Rescue Josh McGuire* in the Classroom" from the Classroom Ideas section of the Hyperion Paperback for Children Fall 1993 catalog.

THROUGH ACTIVITIES

A Mountain Post Card

* Read the first paragraph of Rescue Josh McGuire. Ask students to pretend that they are on a vacation in the wilderness area being described.

* Have students design picture post cards depicting this scene. (See A Mountain Post Card activity sheet.)
- Each student can write a note to someone "back home" on the address/message side of his/her card.

Take Me Seriously.

In the first chapter, Josh is unable to communicate with his father. He's certain that his father has orphaned a cub but can't get him to even consider the possibility.

* Quickwrite: Write about a time when your feelings or ideas were not taken seriously by an adult.

Where in Montana Is Josh McGuire?

* Gather maps of Montana and the Yellowstone National Park area.

- As different towns and geographical landmarks are mentioned in the novel, students can locate them on a map. For example, can they find Tome Miner Basin (p. 5), Paradise Valley (p.25), and Bozeman Pass (p.25)?

* Students can draw their own maps of Josh's flight to save the bear cub.

Response Journal.

Students can keep response journals as they read Rescue Josh McGuire.

* In their response journals, they can respond to any or all of the following:

Passages which are unclear.

Words with unclear meanings - make a guess.

Passages which show foreshadowing - make a prediction.

Words or passages which they feel are particularly beautiful, poetic, or meaningful.

Passages which they question.

Passages which answer a question they have asked earlier.

* Some suggested organizational strategies:

- Divide Journal pages into two columns. some possible headings for the column:

Readings Response

Selected passage Reaction

The book says..... I think.....

- Use a different color of ink when writing in each column to reinforce the concept of report/reaction
- Use Post-It Notes in the book to record reactions to passages. The notes written on the notes can be copied into a journal later, or the notes can be transferred to the second column and become an actual part of the journal.

- Also see "Reader Response and Small and Large Group Interaction" under GENERAL IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES in this activity packet.

* Some suggest prompts for journal writing and discussion:

- p.5. "But he wanted so bad to make his father proud - a task that seemed to grow harder and harder."

- p.14. "It was wonderful discovery; if you were part of the darkness, you were invisible - you were its friend."

- p.58. "Life was like dominoes--one day everything was so neat, then it caved in a piece at a time"

- p.82. "In Sam McGuire's eyes there had been many things: anger, frustration, fear. But not evil."
- p.137. "Please come home, Son. I know you're not Mookee Man."
- p.150. "It looks like Josh has done a lot of things we didn't think he could."
- p.194. "Saving an animal's life could sure be a lot of trouble, he thought, as he trudged into the dark."

Animal Talk.

Ask students to imagine a conversation between Mud Flap and Pokey.

* They are to provide the dialogue for the first meeting between Mud Flap and Pokey at the ranch or some event in which both animals are involved.

* Or they can tell about what Mud Flap and Pokey would say to each other about Josh's behavior.

-A student can write this dialogue as a story, do a cartoon panel, or create a script.

Similes.

Mikaelsen frequently uses similes in his writing. For example, "The shapes of trees, logs, and boulders moved past, hulking in moon shadow like hidden people and crouched animals." (p. 13); "Sam looked like a human tugboat." (p.75); "But arresting Otis would be like spitting at a rattlesnake." (p.124)

* As they read Rescue Josh McGuire, students can keep a list of the similes.

* In partners, students can perform a pantomime dramatizing one of the similes they find.

Personifications.

Mikaelsen uses personification effectively. For example, "... the angry wind held its breath so he could stand....wind stirred the snow, sweeping it into tumbling clouds." (p.69); "This storm here, she's a sassy one." (p.71); "But the fire would have known; fires knew things like that."(p.97); and "The night swallowed his words,;" (p.188)

* As students read Rescue Josh McGuire, they can record personifications that they feel are particularly interesting and meaningful.

* Each student can select his/her favorite personification from the novel and illustrate it.

A Montana News Story.

"Splashed across the front page was Josh's picture and the headline, SEARCH FOR BOY AND CUB CONTINUES." (p.122)

* Have students create a newspaper covering some of the events in Rescue Josh McGuire.

- Divide the class into small groups and decide which group will be assigned to each section of the paper: news, editorial, human interest, sports (Remember it's June.), crossword puzzles, word searches, people column, comics, editorial cartoon, entertainment, local (Montana) advertisements, or others.

Reference: "Using Rescue Josh McGuire in the Classroom" from Classroom Ideas section of the Hyperion Paperback for Children Fall 1993 catalog.

* Alternate activity: Students can write a story to be read over the radio or on television about either Josh's disappearance or his rescue.

Mookee Man.

On pages 88-89, Josh recalls the tale of Mookee Man that he had heard his father tell over and over again as a child.

- * Have students go back and read the story about Mookee Man again. Then have them write about how this story relates to the novel.
- Who is mookee Man?
- How does this story affect the relationships of characters in the novel?

Who Is the Villian?

- * Working in small groups, students can decide who is the villain or most unheroic character in Rescue Josh McGuire.
- The groups should be prepared to defend their choices, citing evidence from the novel.
- Who wins as "Most Unpopular Character?"

Five Rescues.

In Rescue Josh McGuire, five characters are rescued: Josh, Pokey, Mud Flap, Sam, and Otis.

- * Divide the class into five groups. Each group is to focus on one of these rescues, considering not only the facts of each case but also its emotional aspects.
- Each group will present a report on the rescue to the class, doing a television news or human interest story, conducting mock interviews, or developing some other creative presentation.
- Follow up with a class discussion on the differences and similarities between physical and emotional/psychological rescues revealed in the five rescues.

Reference: "Using Rescue Josh McGuire in the Classroom" from the Classroom Ideas section of the Hyperion Paperpack for Children Fall 1993 catalog.

BEYOND ACTIVITIES

To Build a Fire.

- * Read aloud or have students read Jack London's short story "To Build A Fire".
- Discuss how the events of this story compare with Josh's attempts to build a fire in Chapter 14.
- Also compare the attitudes displayed toward animals in "To Build A Fire" and Chapters 14 and 15 of Rescue Josh McGuire.

Fish and Game Regulations.

- * Have the students research the hunting regulations in California and other western states.
- Students can write to the Fish and Game Department of California and other western states.
- They can keep track of the similarities and differences of these regulations.

- * Have students research the controversies over fishing and hunting regulations.
- What are the viewpoints of the members of the class as to the necessity and practicality of these regulations? Does everyone agree?

- * Hold a debate on fishing and hunting regulations in general or on a particular regulation.

Reference: "Using Rescue Josh McGuire in the Classroom" from the Classroom Ideas section of the Hyperion Paperback for Children Fall 1993 catalog.

Extinct Is Forever.

- * Working as partners or in small groups, students can research a North American endangered or protected species.
- Have them write up their findings and share them with the class in brief presentation. They should try to include information on the effects of hunting and hunting regulations on the status of the animals. They might also want to make maps showing the present ranges of the animals as part of their presentations.

Adopt an Animal.

As a class, consider adopting an endangered or protected animal.

* Find out about adopting programs for whales, dolphins, eagles, mustangs, wolves, and other animals.

- Information on adoptions and various other conservancy programs can be found in an 800-number telephone directory and in non-fiction books about these animals that are available in libraries.

* If possible, adopt an endangered or protected animal through one of these programs.

There are more than 280 species on the California State Endangered Species List. The state's Adopt-A-Species program is an opportunity for students to study an endangered species and its habitat and to learn how to implement conservation action plans.

Reference: "Using *Rescue Josh McGuire* in the Classroom" from the Classroom Ideas section of the Hyperion Paperback for Children Fall 1993 catalog.

CLASS-TYPE WRITING PROMPT

PROBLEM/SOLUTION**Writing Situation:**

In *Rescue Josh McGuire*, thirteen-year-old Josh McGuire feels very strongly about a problem in his life. He decides to take a particular action to handle his problem.

Writing Directions:

Write an essay describing the problem Josh had and how he decided to solve it. Also include other possible solutions Josh could have pursued. Discuss the positive and negative aspects of Josh's solution and the alternative ones you have proposed. Give your opinion as to which solution would be the best in a similar real-life situation.

OTHER BOOKS BY BEN MIKAELSEN

Sparrow Hawk Red (Hyperion, 1993)

Stranded (Hyperion, 1994)

Countdown (Hyperion, 1996)

RELATED BOOKS*

Corcoran, Barbara. *Wolf at the Door* (Atheneum, 1993)

DeFelice, Cynthia. *Devil's Bridge* (Macmillan, 1992)

Paulsen, Gary. *The River* (Doubleday, 1991; Dell)

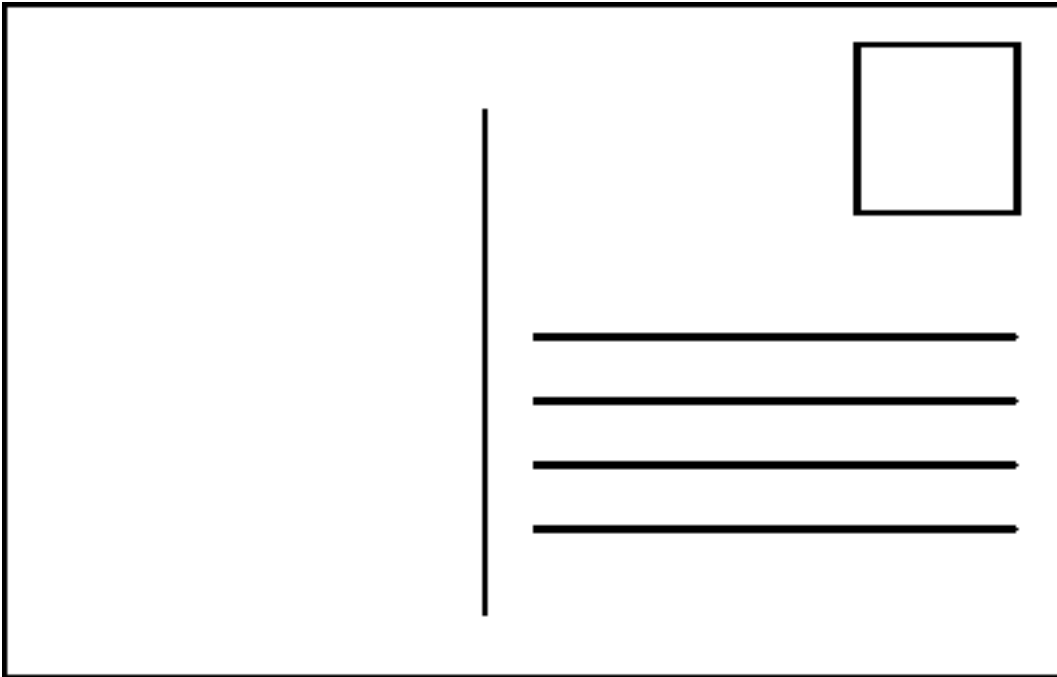
*Information on the availability of titles is based on entries in *Children's Books in Print 1994*.

RELATED MEDIA

Sleeping Bears. Bullfrog Films, 1986. 1/2" VHS videocassette; color; 8 min. Two cubs are examined and measured on a visit to the den of black bears during hibernation to illustrate techniques used by research biologists in studying the habits of bears. A teacher's guide of activities is available.

A MOUNTAIN POST CARD

Design a picture post card of the scene described in the first paragraph of Rescue Josh McGuire. Write a note to someone back home on the address message side.



A Reader's Theater Script for

RESCUE JOSH MCGUIRE

By Ben Mikaelson

Hyperion, 1991 (adapted from Chapter 4 by Danis Kreimeier and Karen Eastland for classroom use only)

Characters: Josh McGuire
Libby McGuire/Mom
Sam McGuire/Dad
Narrator

Introduction: We are going to read for you a scene from Ben Mikaelson's Rescue Josh McGuire. The scene is adapted from Chapter 4. The characters are Josh McGuire, read by _____; Sam McGuire, his dad, read by _____; and Libby McGuire, his mom, read by _____. The narrator is _____.

Narrator: At last Josh spotted the pickup. Would Dad have found the note? Dad couldn't get mad, once he saw the cub--now the cub was safe. Worry haunted Josh and he paused, sudden fear tugging at him. The cub would have died--wouldn't Dad see that? Drawing in a deep breath Josh ducked under a fallen tree on the trail and pulled the cub into camp.

Josh: Dad. Dad. I found the cub.

Sam: You found a cub all right. What a stupid thing to do.

Josh: What do you mean?

Sam: The mother could have killed you-- pulling a dumb stunt like that.

Josh: Dad...the mom's dead. We shot her.

Sam: I told you we didn't shoot no mom. There's a sow up there now looking for this cub, and you, dumb fool, you're waltzing into camp like you own it.

Josh: But Dad, I found the cub sleeping right near the gut pile. He was....

Narrator: Sam's hand smashed across Josh's face like a basketball bat, snapping his head hard to the side. Thunder erupted in his ears and funny colors crawled across the sky. As he fell, all he could think to do was cling to the rope. A sweet taste filled his mouth and his eyes watered.

Sam: I...I didn't mean to hit you, Josh. I only meant to slap you.

Josh: Get away from me! Get away from me!

Narrator: The cub twisted and jerked on the rope, helping pull Josh away. When his father's hazy form no longer loomed over him, Josh crouched. Dad had become a crazy man.

Josh: Please don't hit me again, Dad, please.

Sam: I'm not going to hit you Son. Put the cub in the camper.

Josh: Are we going home?

Sam: Yes.

Narrator: Bouncing and rattling down the road, Josh found grub for the cub. At first he eyed Josh with distrust, then ate and drank cautiously. Josh rested his hand on the cub's back and felt trembling under the soft fuzzy hair.

After seven miles of rough gravel, they reached pavement and the rattling stopped. The tires hummed on the smooth highway, and warm sunlight flooded the side window. Soon the cub nodded and closed his button eyes. Exhausted himself, Josh dozed off and scarcely noticed the seventy-mile trip through Paradise Valley and west over Bozeman Pass.

When he woke up, the pickup was turning onto the gravel for the last mile home. As they pulled into the yard, Josh saw his mother, Libby, standing in the yard, eggs bunched in her apron.

Mom: Sam, where is Josh?

Dad: In back.

Mom: What in tarnation? Josh, what's wrong?

Josh: We killed his mom....we killed his mom.