



Teacher Guide
for
The Sea Serpent and Me
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Summary

When a tiny sea serpent tumbles from the bathtub faucet, a little girl finds an unexpected friend. As rainy day after rainy day passes, the two sing songs, take baths, and talk about the sea. But little girls live on land and a growing sea serpent needs wave upon wave of water. The little girl must bring the sea serpent back to the sea and help him face his fear of growing up.

Teaching Ideas

The Sea Serpent and Me provides an opportunity for students to connect the text to their own experience by discussing friendship and fears. The little girl and the sea serpent are friends, but their friendship requires the little girl to do something difficult – she must take the sea serpent back to the sea and say goodbye to him. For his part, the sea serpent has to overcome his fear of the great green ocean. Students will be able to compare their own experiences with the experiences of the two characters in the story and talk about sacrifices they might make for their friends and strategies they've used for overcoming fears.

A second set of lessons uses the sea serpent's growth to teach mathematical concepts of measurement, estimation, and doubling as students compare the sea serpent's length to other objects in the story (non-standard measurements), and predict how long it will take him to reach the size of a whale.

Comprehension and Discussion Questions for
The Sea Serpent and Me

Comprehension Questions

1. Where did the little girl find the sea serpent?
2. How did he get into the bathtub?
3. Where does he belong?
4. What stops the little girl from taking him to the beach?
5. Why does the bathtub get crowded?
6. How big do sea serpents get?
7. How does the sea serpent feel about going to the sea before they go to the beach?
8. How does the sea serpent feel when it's time for him to leave?
9. What does the sea serpent worry about?
10. How does the little girl help the sea serpent get over his fears?
11. What does the little girl hear from her room that night?

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of mythical animal would you like to find?
2. What would you do with it?
3. Why does the little girl say that she "sort of wanted it to be sunny in the morning and sort of wanted it to rain?"
4. Have you ever had to give up something you wanted to keep?
5. Why do you think the sea serpent says he wants to stay with the little girl?
6. Why doesn't she let him?
7. What would you have done?
8. What kinds of things have you done for your friends?
9. Have you ever felt like you didn't want to grow up?
10. Have you ever felt afraid of trying something new?
11. How have you gotten over your fears?

Make up a story about finding a mythical creature



What did it look like?

Where did you find it?

What things did you do together?

Did your creature cause any problems?

Write about a time you were afraid to do something.



What were you afraid of?

Why were you afraid?

What did you do to get over your fear?

Were you happy with the result?

Write a story in which the little girl doesn't take the sea serpent back to the sea.



What Happens to the Sea Serpent After He Leaves?



*Write a story about his first day back
in the sea.*

Who does he meet?

What does he do?

Sample Lesson Plans for *The Sea Serpent and Me*

Language Arts: Comparisons

There are many similes in *The Sea Serpent and Me*. The sea serpent says that sea serpents get “as big as the ocean is deep, and as long as the current is strong.” “Manta rays swim like dancing blankets.” The girl and the sea serpent “float as gently as stars in the sky.”

Explain to students that a simile makes a comparison between two things that are not alike in most ways but are similar in one important way. For example, both things might be blue, or soft, or angry. Similes usually use the words “like” or “as.” Give them some examples, e.g. quiet as a mouse, solid as a rock, strong as an ox. Read them *The Sea Serpent and Me* and ask them to point out the similes they hear.

Now ask the students to write a description of a mythical creature, a real creature, or an animal they've invented using as many similes as they can. Remind them that they might want to describe the animal's eyes, mouth, body, wings, horns, mane, talons teeth and color, as well as the sound it makes, the way it moves, and how it sleeps or eats.

Science: Sea Creatures

- Research a creature that lives in the ocean. Are there really fish shaped like guitars and crabs with antlers? What creatures might the sea serpent meet?
- Are sea serpents real? Find out what scientists say about sea serpents and creatures that might be mistaken for sea serpents. Visit:
<http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/detectives/kids/KIDS-000523.html>

Math: A Lesson In Doubling

“How big do sea serpents get?” I asked.

“The big ones are as big as a very small island; the small ones are as big as a whale.”

Tell the students that a blue whale is 80 feet long. If you can, provide them with a string or piece of yarn that is 80 feet long so that they can see how big that is. Ask several students to help stretch the string out so everyone can see. They will have to walk around the classroom and spread the string out over several sides of the room.

Tell them that the sea serpent starts out 1 foot long. Show them how big that is by holding up a ruler. Then ask, “If the sea serpent doubles its size every day, how many days do you think it will take for him to be as big as a whale?” Remind them that the blue whale is 80 feet, and the sea serpent is 1 foot. Many of them will guess 80 days. Some will guess 40.

Write their guesses down on the board.

Now, take them through one week, stopping periodically to see if they want to change their guesses. Write the numbers on the board so they can see the pattern emerge.

On Tuesday, the sea serpent is 1 foot long. If he doubles in size every day, how big will he be on Wednesday?

On Wednesday, the sea serpent is 2 feet long. If he doubles in size every day, how big will he be on Thursday?

On Thursday, the sea serpent is 4 feet long. If he doubles in size every day, how big will he be on Friday?

Stop here, and ask if they have any new ideas about how long it will take the sea serpent to get to be the size of a blue whale – 80 feet long.

On Friday, the sea serpent is 8 feet long. If he doubles in size every day, how big will he be on Saturday?

On Saturday, the sea serpent is 16 feet long. How big will he be on Sunday?

Sunday is no day of rest for the sea serpent. He's now 32 feet long. How long will he be on Monday?

On Monday, the sea serpent is 64 feet long. How big will he be on Tuesday?

That's right – he got to be bigger than a blue whale in *one week*. Ask them if they were surprised, and why it is that the sea serpent was able to grow so fast. Make sure that they understand the concept of doubling – the bigger the sea serpent is, the faster he seems to grow!

Math: A Lesson in Measuring and Estimating

Begin by showing the students how the sea serpent grows larger in successive illustrations.

Provide each child with a two inch rectangle labeled “fish tank” and a six inch rectangle labeled “bathtub.” Explain that inches here are standing in for feet. Talk about how you can use any object as a unit of measurement.

Distribute the chart on the next page and have children work together or individually to fill it out. Remind them that they can come up with answers any way they like – by using the paper squares or by setting up equations.

HOW BIG IS YOUR SEA SERPENT?

A fish tank is 2 feet long

A bathtub is 6 feet long

TUESDAY

“On Tuesday, as I was about to climb into the bath, a sea serpent dropped out of the faucet and into the tub.”

Your sea serpent is the length of one fish tank.

How many feet long is your sea serpent?



WEDNESDAY



“We went swimming in the bathtub, but it suddenly felt crowded...”

Your sea serpent is now the length of one bathtub.

How many feet long is your sea serpent?

Draw how many fish tanks it would take to make one sea serpent.

THURSDAY

“By bedtime, my sea serpent was too large for the fish tank, so I put him back in the tub.”

Your sea serpent is now the length of two bathtubs.

How many feet long is he?



Draw how many fish tanks it would take to make one sea serpent now.

FRIDAY

“When Friday came...my sea serpent was so long that his tail was resting in the sink.”

Your sea serpent is now the length of 3 bathtubs.

How many feet long is he?



Draw how many fish tanks it would take to make one sea serpent now.

More Activities for *The Sea Serpent and Me*

Just For Fun:

- Have an indoor beach party like the little girl and the sea serpent, with beach music, and sea-themed snacks.
- Have each child make a home for a tiny sea serpent using a fish bowl or glass jar, gravel, leaves, and play dough or modeling clay.
- Make a sea serpent sock puppet (instructions can be found at www.dashkaslater.com)

Resources:

- An author biography for children can be found at www.dashkaslater.com
- Teachers who want to have students write to Dashka should contact her at info@dashkaslater.com to receive an address.