

ABEL'S ISLAND

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By William Steig

Themes: Animal Tales, Growth and Change, Humor, Seasons

Grade Level: 2—6

Running Time: 30 minutes

SUMMARY

This is a Crusoe-inspired adventure story featuring a snobbish mouse, Abelard Hassam DeChirico Flint. Out on a genteel picnic with his darling wife Amanda, Abel gets swept away by a sudden storm. After a terrifying plunge over a waterfall, Abel lands on a small island. For a whole year, Abel braves the island and its terrors. But through it all Abel stays strong and keeps hoping and trying. At last, "in the hugging heat of July," the water goes down enough for Abel to swim back home. The story ends with a joyful reunion with Amanda. Written, illustrated and narrated with droll humor, this tale celebrates the qualities that help people get through bad times.

OBJECTIVES

¥ Children will watch and listen to a fictional story.

¥ Children will identify and appreciate qualities that enable people to overcome misfortunes, including ingenuity, patience, hope, imagination, and perseverance.

¥ Children will appreciate the use of humor in both words and pictures.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Ask students if they have ever imagined being stranded alone on an island. Have them

imagine what they would do to survive. If students are familiar with Robinson Crusoe, The Swiss Family Robinson, or other similar stories, ask them to recall details from those tales. Then introduce the title and the main character, a mouse.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

In recalling and discussing the story, focus on the character of Abel. What was Abel like at the beginning of the story? Ask students to describe their own impressions and to recall the exact details that gave that impression. For example, Abel's preferred diet of caviar and mushroom omelets and his use of his full name show that he is snob. Discuss how Abel changes throughout the story. Encourage students to recall how the memory of Amanda helps him through the worst times. What does Abel discover about himself while he is on the island?

Connect the story to writing. Have students compose their own stories about being stranded on islands. The stories can be told in any form, including prose, poetry, or even comic strips. Students can also work in teams to compose and tell their stories. Older students can produce videos and animated features, assembled by computer.

Connect the story to social studies by having students draw imaginary maps of the locations in the story. Students can draw maps of Mouseville and its surrounding areas or of Abel's Island only. Maps should contain map keys and map symbols. Students can also

make maps of the imaginary islands they have created in their stories.

Connect the story to science by focusing on the seasons. Have students recall how the seasons changed during the story and how Abel adapted to each season. Ask student teams to research real field mice and report on how they adapt to seasonal changes. Still another team can report on the water cycle through the seasons. Encourage students to go online to find statistics about annual spring floods, winter freezes, spring thaws and summer drought.

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