

HENRY BUILDS A CABIN

HENRY BUILDS A CABIN

by D.B. Johnson
(Houghton Mifflin)

Themes: Environment, History, Literature, Nature

Grade Level: K–3 (ages 4–8)

Running Time: 8 minutes

SUMMARY

A bear named Henry is the hero of this story, which describes how Henry David Thoreau built his cabin at Walden. The simple words and bright pictures show Henry planning his cabin, cutting trees, fashioning logs, and assembling the structure. When Henry's friends Emerson, Alcott, and Miss Lydia object that the cabin is too small, Henry shows them the garden (his dining room), a sunny outdoor spot (his library) and a place by the pond (his ballroom). The finished cabin, as Henry promised his friends, is "bigger than it looks." Younger children will especially enjoy the colorful drawings with many details from nature. Older children will appreciate the end of the program, "About Henry's Cabin," about Thoreau and Walden Pond.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to an imaginative adaptation of a true story.
- Children will describe the sights, sounds and activities of nature.
- Children will define what a home is and describe activities that take place in it.
- Children will meet Henry David Thoreau and his friends.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Ask children to discuss the title and to define the word

cabin. Have them share what they know about cabins, such as where, when, and why cabins are used.

Encourage them to describe how they would feel about living in a cabin instead of the houses or apartments where they now live. Then explain that this story is about a man who chooses to live in a cabin in the woods. In fact, his cabin is one of the most famous houses in history. With older students, relate the opening discussion more directly to Thoreau.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Ask children to discuss why Henry's cabin was so small and whether they think it was too small or just the right size. Children should recognize that the cabin was cheap to build, that it used recycled materials, and that it could be built by hand, with one person doing most of the work. Compare Henry's attitudes toward eating, reading, and dancing with those of his friends. Discuss how Henry felt about nature and how nature helped make his home bigger than it looked.

This program is an excellent introduction to environmental science. With younger students, go back over the program, stopping the frames to notice details from nature. Pay special attention to how nature changes from season to season. Compare Henry's cabin to the animal homes they see in the pictures, which include birds' nests, rocks for snakes, hollow logs for turtles and chipmunks, and even a beaver's lodge. Encourage children to make science reports about these and other animals and their homes.

Encourage older children do research in the library or online to find out more about Henry David Thoreau and Walden Pond. Have them write reports and draw pictures about what they have learned and share them with the class.

Connect the story to art, history and the environment by having students draw a mural of the landscape in the book and then to fill the landscape with objects they would find in the same landscape today. To get them thinking, have them study a map of the Boston area and locate Walden.

Connect the story to writing by asking children to imagine living alone in a small cabin out in nature and writing poems or stories about their experiences. Encourage children to include details from their own experiences in scouting, hiking, or camping. Remind them to use all their senses—smell, sight, touch, hearing, taste—to give their work a sense of reality.

Connect the story to art, math, and technology by having them design cabins or houses of their own. The designs should include lists of materials and calculations of costs, including the cost of labor. Visit construction sites or ask builders to visit your classroom to help children understand what goes into building a modern house, even a very small one.

Connect the story to American history and literature by having students research the biographies of Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bronson Alcott.

Other related videos and films available from Weston Woods include:
HENRY HIKES TO FITCHBURG, by D.B. Johnson
JOHNNY APPLESEED, by Reeve Lindbergh, illustrated by Kathy Jakobsen

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

HENRY HIKES TO FITCHBURG

HENRY HIKES TO FITCHBURG

by D.B. Johnson (Houghton Mifflin)
Themes: Environment, History, Literature, Nature
Grade Level: K - 4
Running Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

This story about two bear friends was inspired by a passage in *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. Henry and his friend have two different approaches to travel, and two different philosophies of life. While his friend does odd jobs to earn the 90-cent train fare, Henry travels on foot, enjoying the beauty of nature as he goes. The brightly colored pictures are in simple, modern style that evokes the charm of early American folk painting. The words are minimal; the pictures are full of enchanting detail. Younger children will especially enjoy counting along as Henry and his friend add up the cents and miles. Older children will appreciate the last page, "About Henry," a factual account of Thoreau and the source of the story.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to an imaginative adaptation of a true story.
- Children will describe the sights, sounds and activities of a walk in nature.
- Children will compare and evaluate two methods of reaching the same goal.
- Children will be introduced to Henry David Thoreau.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Show students the cover, and ask them to discuss the title and art. With younger students, discuss what Henry might see on a hike. Then ask students to find a clue about some other way to travel, besides walking. After they have found the railroad tracks, alert them to compare the difference between walking and going by train as they enjoy the story.

With older students, relate the opening discussion more directly to Thoreau. Inform students that although Henry is a bear, he's based on a real person named Henry. Based on clues from the cover, ask students to guess where and when the real Henry lived. Ask them to stay alert for clues to who, what, where, when and why as they enjoy the story.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

To encourage children to express the feelings evoked by the program, ask them to look back at the story from the points of view of both Henry and his friend. Have students share opinions as to which bear made the better choice. Ask students who support Henry to remember what he saw and experienced on his hike. Ask students who support Henry's friend to remember what work got done as he earned his 90 cents.

Connect the story to science and the environment by reviewing the pictures in detail. With younger students, have students list the people, animals and things they see in the towns with the people, plants, and animals they see on Henry's hike. With older students, ask students to compare details from the story and pictures

with what they would see today if they walked from town to town.

Connect the story to art, history and the environment by having students draw a mural of the landscape in the book and then to fill the landscape with objects they would find today.

Connect the story to writing by having students compose stories, poems, plays or songs from the viewpoints of the animals Henry meets on his hike.

Connect the story to math by having students write story problems about Henry's hike (distance in miles) and Henry's friend's work (addition to 90). Encourage students to write other story problems from an imaginary hike of their own.

Connect the story to American history and literature by having students research the biographies of Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bronson Alcott.

Other videos and films about nature and the environment available from Weston Woods include:

JOHNNY APPLESEED by Reeve Lindbergh, illustrated by Kathy Jakobsen
IN THE SMALL, SMALL POND by Denise Fleming
MISS RUMPHIUS by Barbara Cooney
OWL MOON by Jane Yolen, ill. by John Schoenherr
TIME OF WONDER by Robert McCloskey

CALL 1-800-243-5020 TO ORDER THESE AND OTHER WESTON WOODS VIDEOS!

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction