

# CROW BOY

## **Crow Boy**

by Taro Yashima (Viking)

Themes: Japanese Culture/The Five Senses/Tolerance

Level: Grades PreK-4

Length 13 minutes, iconographic

## **CROW BOY**

By Taro Yashima (Viking)

Themes: Japanese Culture/The Five Senses/Social

Acceptance

Grade Level: K-3

Running Time: 13 minutes, iconographic

### Summary

CROW BOY, the film, is true to the book, CROW BOY, by Taro Yashima. The story takes place in Japan, where a boy nicknamed Chibi hides under the schoolhouse on the first day of school. As the school year progresses, the other children learn that Chibi is afraid of the teacher and the other students who poke fun at his strangeness. Chibi spends most of this time alone, and entertains himself by studying the tiniest of details, including the wood grain of a desk, the cloth of a boy's shirt and, of course, all of the sights available through the classroom windows.

When Chibi reaches the sixth grade, he is fortunate enough to have a teacher who appreciates his ability to use each of his five senses to learn about the world around him. One day, the teacher announces that Chibi will imitate the voices of crows as his talent show performance. Everyone is amazed as they listen to Chibi imitate mother, father and baby crows, crows calling to each other happily, etc. As the children listen, they come to realize that Chibi must live in a place that is very isolated and far away, as that is the only place where he could have heard these crow sounds.

With a greater understanding of Chibi and the distances he had to travel by foot each day to get back and forth to school, the children come to appreciate him and regret thinking him strange and treating him unfairly.

The story ends with the children occasionally meeting in the village since the end of school, and respectfully calling Chibi by a new name, Crow Boy.

### OBJECTIVES

- Children will explore Japanese culture.
- Children will understand that they can learn many things by using their five senses.
- Children will learn to respect individual differences.

### BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book CROW BOY with children.

Talk with children about the ways each of them is similar to, and different from, their classmates.

Encourage children to discuss their favorite classroom activities, sports, things they like to do at home, etc., as a way of helping them understand the ways in which they are similar, and, at the same time, unique individuals.

Take a listening walk outdoors with children. Encourage them to use their ears and listen carefully in order to identify the many different sounds they hear. Later, take a touching walk, a seeing walk, and a smelling walk. In each case, have children identify those things they can feel, see or smell as they explore the outdoors. When children are ready to view the video, tell them that the boy in the story, Crow Boy, is someone very special because he explores the world with each of his five senses all the time. Encourage children to watch the video closely to discover just what Crow Boy learns about the world by using his senses and what a special individual Crow Boy is.

### After Viewing Activities

Have children dramatize the story of Crow Boy. After the dramatization, ask the child who portrayed Crow Boy:

- How did you feel when the children teased you and called you names?
- How did you feel at the end of the play?

Ask the children who played Crow Boy's classmates:

- How do you feel about the way you treated Crow Boy?

Talk with children about the importance of showing caring and compassion toward others.

Discuss the signs of Japanese culture that were evident in the story. Ask:

- How were the homes, style of dress, signs, vehicles, etc. different from what we see in our country?
- What would you like most about living in Japan? Least?

Later, try to visit a museum with objects representative of Japanese culture available for children to explore. As children explore the exhibits, encourage them to try and identify objects they may have seen in the video.

Talk with children about the printed words and signs they saw. Ask:

- Does Japanese printing look like ours?
- How is it different?

If possible, share some documents, signs, or other written materials printed in Japanese, with children and display them in the classroom. Provide children with black crayons and construction paper that they can use to invent their own letters. Have children describe their symbols and the letters they represent to their classmates.

Other films and videos about Japanese culture are available from Weston Woods include:

THE STONECUTTER by Gerald McDermott  
SUHO AND THE WHITE HORSE written by Yuzo Otsuka & illustrated by Suekichi Akaba

Other films and videos about being different are available from Weston Woods include:

MOON MAN by Tomi Ungerer

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

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

# FOURTEEN RATS & A RAT CATCHER

## Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher

by James Cressey, illustrated by Tamasin Cole (Simon & Schuster)

Themes: Critical Thinking/Animals & Pets

Grade Level: K-2

Running Time: 10 minutes, animated

## SUMMARY

Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher begins with an elderly woman who lives in a home with rats in the basement. The woman wants to be rid of the rats, and the rats, who have a wonderful life in the basement of the woman's cottage, want to be rid of the woman.

The woman buys a cat to catch the rats. However, when this plan fails, she decides to hire a rat catcher. The rats send the largest rat to confront the rat catcher. Between the two of them, they devise a plan that will allow all to live happily ever after. The end of the story finds the rat catcher happily married to the woman and the rats keeping their promise to live as quietly as mice so as not to disturb the new couple upstairs.

This story is an intriguing way to introduce students to critical thinking and point of view. The woman finds the rats annoying. The rats find the woman annoying. Which position can be justified?

## Objectives

- Children will learn how to think critically
- Children will investigate ways to solve problems
- Children will learn to respect other points of views

## Before Viewing Activities

Share the book Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher with children. Talk with children about arguments they may have

had with friends or family members. Ask: What were the arguments about? Did you understand why the other person felt the way they did? How did you feel when you couldn't make the other person understand how you felt? How did your argument end?

Show children an abstract painting or collage. Ask children to discuss what they see in the painting/collage, or how the artwork makes them feel. As children talk, help them recognize the differences among their responses, stressing the unique way each person sees things.

## After Viewing Activities

Offer children the following story starter: One day as I was walking to school, I passed by the largest rat anyone had ever seen... Have children create their own stories by continuing the idea introduced by the story starter. Later allow children to add illustrations to their stories and display them on a classroom wall or bulletin board.

Give children some experience with some simple opinion polls. For example, have children think about their favorite classroom activities. Have one child be responsible for carrying a list of classroom activities from person to person and checking off the activities they identify as their favorites. (For younger children, you might want to devise a simple picture chart, rather than a list, to illustrate the activities in your classroom.) After the poll is taken, help children analyze the data, determining which activities are preferred most and which are among the least desirable. As you discuss the poll, help children see how each person has an opinion, and that each person's preferences and opinions are important and deserve consideration.

Remind children of the problem that was the focus of Fourteen Rats & A Rat Catcher. Ask children: How did the rat catcher and the large rat solve their problem so that the rats and the woman could live in the same cottage peace-

fully? Present the following hypothetical situations to children. Encourage them to talk together in order to decide how each of these problems might be solved.

A boy, his younger brother, and his dad moved into a new house. The older boy wanted the biggest bedroom. The little boy wanted it, too. What could the brothers do to solve the problem?

Two sisters went to a pet shop with their parents. Their mom and dad said they could choose one pet. One sister wanted a puppy. The other wanted a kitten. How could they solve their problem?

Two friends were watching a video at home. One friend thought the movie was funny and wanted to keep watching it. The other friend thought the movie was scary and wanted it turned off. What could the two friends do to solve their problem?

Other book based films and videos about critical thinking are available from Weston Woods: These include:

BURT DOW: DEEP WATER MAN by Robert McCloskey  
CHANGES, CHANGES by Pat Hutchins  
DOCTOR DE SOTO by William Steig  
ROSIE'S WALK by Pat Hutchins  
THE STONECUTTER by Gerald McDermott  
STREGA NONNA by Tomie de Paola  
THE WIZARD by Jack Kent

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

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction

# JOHN BROWN, ROSE AND THE MIDNIGHT CAT

## JOHN BROWN, ROSE AND THE MIDNIGHT CAT

by Jenny Wagner, ill. by Ron Brooks  
Themes: Friendship, Pets, Sibling Rivalry  
Grade Level: Pre-K-2  
Running Time: 7 minutes, iconographic

### SUMMARY

JOHN BROWN, ROSE AND THE MIDNIGHT CAT is the tale of an elderly widow named Rose whose friend and companion is a dog named John Brown. John Brown is a loyal friend and caretaker for Rose, looking out for her as best he can. One night, Rose thinks she hears a cat out in the garden. John Brown assures her that it is not a cat. When Rose goes to bed, he goes outside and confronts the noisemaker, who really is a cat. John Brown, jealous at the thought of someone else receiving Rose's attention, tells the cat to stay away.

When Rose realizes that there is a cat outdoors, she cares for it by leaving a bowl of milk outside the front door. Each night jealous John Brown tips the milk bowl over. One morning, Rose does not get out of bed. She feels ill and tells John Brown that she will not be getting up. John Brown worries about Rose all day. Finally he enters her room and asks if the cat would make her feel better. When Rose replies, "Oh, yes!" John Brown brings the cat in. The end of the story finds a contented Rose, John Brown and the newcomer cat relaxing and enjoying the quiet—and one another!

### OBJECTIVES

- Children will explore the meaning of friendship.
- Children will learn about ways of caring for pets.

- Children will investigate the importance pets have to their owners.

### BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book, JOHN BROWN, ROSE AND THE MIDNIGHT CAT, with children.

Then ask children in the class to describe their feelings about their siblings.

- Do they get jealous when Mom or Dad pays attention to another sibling?
- Don't they still love their brothers/sisters after all?
- What do we know about John Brown?

Do a simple character study using specific references from the book.

Talk with children about their pets. (If children do not have pets, encourage them to describe the kind of pet they would enjoy having.) Ask:

- How do you (would you) care for your pet?
- How do you (would you) feel about your pet?

Discuss children's relationships with their friends. Ask:

- Do you have a special friend?
- What kinds of things do you like to do together?
- What do you like most about your friend?
- How would you feel if your special friend became friends with someone else?
- Would it be difficult to share your friend?
- If so, what could you do to feel better about this?

Visit a pet shop with children. Before the trip, work with children to draw up a list of questions about pets they would like answers to. After investigating the many different kinds of pets available, encourage children to ask the shop staff questions from their list and any additional questions they might have about the animals.

### AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Have children investigate the feeling between pet owners and their pets by being cub reporters. Help children tape record interviews with various school staff members who have pets. Have children ask questions of the pet owners such as:

- What kind of pet do you have?
- What is its name?
- How long have you had your pet?
- Why is your pet special to you?
- How do you care for your pet?

Later, play the interviews back for children. As children listen, discuss the conclusions they draw about the relationship between the pet owners and their pets. You might want to help older children print their findings and display them on a bulletin board under the heading "Friends Forever!"

Have children draw pictures of their own pets or pets they would like to have. Attach writing paper to the bottom of each drawing. Have younger children dictate their feelings about their pets and print the dictations. Older children can work independently to print information about their pets. Later, display the drawings and stories on a classroom wall to share with visitors.

### Other videos about friendship available from Weston Woods include:

**Andy and the Lion** by James Daugherty  
**Apt. 3** by Ezra Jack Keats

**The Beast of Monsieur Racine** by Tomi Ungerer

**The Caterpillar & the Polliwog** by Jack Kent

**Danny and the Dinosaur** by Syd Hoff

**Happy Birthday, Moon** by Frank Asch

**The Island of the Skog** by Steven Kellogg

**Mike Mulligan & his Steam Shovel** by Virginia Lee Burton

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

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction