

BURT DOW: DEEP WATER MAN

Burt Dow: Deep Water Man

by Robert McCloskey

Themes: Adventure/Problem-Solving

Level: Grades 1 - 4

Length: 10 minutes, animated

Summary

BURT DOW DEEP-WATER MAN is the tale of a retired fisherman who has never quite gotten the sea out of his system. Burt Dow is particularly fond of his boat, the Tidely-Idley, which he constantly repairs. One day, Burt takes the Tidely-Idley out to sea, and while fishing, catches the tail of a whale! Burt manages to get the fish hook out of the whale's tail and puts a bandage on the site of the injury. Suddenly, a huge wind rocks the boat and Burt asks the whale to swallow them up, just temporarily, to protect them from the weather. Once inside the whale's stomach, Burt begins to wonder whether the whale will remember to open his mouth and let them out again. To make sure that this will happen, Burt lines the whale's stomach with oil and paint and other things he finds at the bottom of the Tidely-Idley. Eventually, the whale shivers and shakes enough from his now upset stomach to let Burt and the boat out. The end of the story finds Burt surrounded by a school of whales, all waiting for a bandage just like the one Burt had given their whale friend. Burt happily leaves the whales, and the sea, to arrive home in time to eat.

Objectives

- o Children will explore problem-solving techniques
- o Children will discover the advantages of being resourceful
- o Children will learn about the skills of a fisherman

Before Viewing Activities

Share the book Burt Dow Deep-Water Man with children.

Talk with children about fishing as an occupation. Encourage children to describe the responsibilities that they think someone who fishes for a living might have. Ask: If you were to fish for a living, what do you think you would enjoy most about the job? Least? What kinds of things would be important to know? How would the weather affect your job?

Ask children to describe boat rides they may have taken. Ask: How did it feel to be out on the sea, river, lake, etc., on a boat? What kind of boat were you riding in? What kind of motion did you feel? What did the person controlling the boat do to make it go, stop, turn around, pick up speed, etc. What were the different parts of the boat that you recognized?

After Viewing Activities

Talk with the children about the interesting "painting" Burt Dow created on the whale's stomach walls. Then attach large sheets of kraft paper to a classroom wall, covering as much of the wall as possible. Provide paints that the children can use to creatively paint on this large "canvas". Also provide sponges, plastic spoons and forks, corks and other objects that children can use as substitutes for paint brushes. (You might want to try this activity outdoors.) Later, ask: How did it feel to paint on such a large space? What kinds of objects did you enjoy using to get the paint onto the canvas? How is the feeling you get from painting this way different from the way you feel when painting on a smaller space?

Have children put on their own performance of the story, Burt Dow, Deep Water-Man, for other classes. Several desks turned upside down, would make a wonderful boat prop. Children can also cut out and paint a seaside environment, including an ocean, boats, fisherman, and whales to use as a backdrop for the play. Create paper wings for the child who will play giggling gull and provide a large raincoat, rain hat and boots for your very own Burt Dow!

Talk about the dilemmas Burt Dow encountered and the ways he solved his problems. Ask children: What other things could Burt have done when the wind picked up, besides going into the whale's stomach? How could Burt have helped himself by using the things he had in the bottom of his boat? Encourage children to be as creative as possible as they consider alternative solutions to Burt's dilemmas.

Find a non-fiction book about whales. Show children the parts of a whale and explain their functions.

Other book based films and videos with themes of problem solving are available from Weston Woods. These include:

CAPS FOR SALE by Esphyr Slobodkina
CHANGES, CHANGES by Pat Hutchins
CHARLIE NEEDS A CLOAK by Tomi de Paola
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