

# THE CLOWN OF GOD

## THE CLOWN OF GOD

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Themes: Italian Culture/ Religion/ Christmas

Grade Level: K-3

Running Time: 10 minutes, animated

### SUMMARY

THE CLOWN OF GOD takes place in the Italian town of Sorrento, where a young boy begs for bread and juggles for pleasure. When a group of wandering entertainers comes to the boy's town, the boy begs to be included in the show as a juggler. Soon the boy is introducing the show with his juggling and pleasing crowds wherever he performs.

Time goes on and the boy grows older. At one point in his travels, the young juggler meets two brothers of a religious order who tell him that his work is the work of God. As the juggler, now elderly, decides to "go home" by journeying to the monastery where he can live out his days. Once there, he arrives in time for the celebration of the birthday of the Christ child. As a gift, the juggler performs for the child, who is seen in a picture on the lap of his mother. The child appears sad to the juggler and the juggler determines to make him happy. When the juggler finishes his performance, his heart stops beating. The brothers who come and find him discover that the Christ child is now pictured with a smiling face, holding one of the juggler's golden balls.

### OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about religious beliefs.
- Children will explore Italian culture.
- Children will understand the importance of hard work and perseverance.

### BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book THE CLOWN OF GOD with children. Locate Italy on a map. Show the children how far it is from where they live. Then ask...

- How are the people's clothing in the story differ-

ent from the clothing we wear now?

Study the character of the boy juggler. We know many things about him.

(Answers: He is poor, loves to juggle, happy at first, a good juggler.) Have the children draw pictures of him as he was young or old. Talk with children about jugglers they may have seen as part of circus or carnival acts. Ask:

- What was the juggler juggling?
- Did the juggler ever miss?
- How did you feel watching the juggler perform?
- Would you like to be a juggler? Why? Why not?

Have children who are familiar with other languages share some simple words and phrases with their classmates. Then encourage children to listen carefully to the words and accents used in the story to explore the differences between the Italian language and their own.

Encourage children to listen carefully to the background music, particularly the music used at the end of the story. Later, ask:

- What kind of music do you hear as the juggler is busy performing for people?
- What kind of music do you hear as the juggler walks to the monastery?
- What kind of music do you hear inside the monastery?
- How does the music make you feel?

Provide several small plastic balls that children can use to practice juggling while at recess. Ask:

- Was it easy to juggle? Why? Why not?
- What were the children who were watching you doing?
- How do you think you would feel about juggling in front of a large audience?
- What helped the juggler in the story get better and better at juggling?
- What might have happened if he simply gave up when the man who ran the show said that he could not perform with them?
- How do you think he felt about performing for

crowds of people?

- How do you think he felt when he heard the applause?

Have children recall what the brothers told the juggler when he met them. Explain that people have many different kinds of religious beliefs, and, the beliefs of the brothers in the story are just one of them. Have children who care to share their own religious beliefs with others in the group. Encourage children to think about the ways their own beliefs are similar to, and different from, their classmates.

Ask children to describe skills that they have developed over time. (Children may be taking piano lessons, dance lessons, learning to bicycle ride, play sports, etc.). As children share their knowledge of these activities with their classmates, ask:

- How well did you do this when you began learning?
- What has helped you to improve?
- How do you feel when you do this well?
- Did you ever feel like giving up?
- What made you decide to keep trying/
- Are you glad you kept trying? Why?

As children respond to these questions, emphasize the importance of hard work and perseverance when learning a new skill.

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