

# THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A FLY

## **THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A FLY**

by Simms Taback

(Viking/Penguin)

Themes: Fantasy and Imagination, Humor

Grade Level: preK–4 (ages 3–10)

Running Time: 7 minutes

### **SUMMARY**

Based on a Caldecott Honor Book, this program is a hilarious re-adaptation of a familiar childhood poem. The more familiar the poem is to children, the more they will enjoy the new twists provided by the extra animal comments and the brightly colored folk art illustrations filled with humorous details.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Children will watch and listen to a funny folk tale in rhyme.
- Children will guess what will happen next in a story.
- Children will group and classify objects in a scientific manner.

### **BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES**

Show students the cover of the book or video, and ask them to discuss the title and art. If they already know the poem, ask them to recite it, but to keep quiet during the first playing of the

program in order to pay close attention to the pictures.

### **AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES**

Replay the program, this time with class participation. Have some students read the main poem, others the extra lines and the class as a whole chime in on key lines.

Connect the story to science and math by using the art to group and classify. The artist, Simms Taback, has thoughtfully added scenes intended to develop just those skills. Go back over the program screen by screen. Find the scenes that show many objects, either ungrouped or in groups. Discuss what makes the objects or animals in each group alike and different.

Connect the story to literature and art by having children perform the poem. Use the illustrator's folk art style to inspire children to make animal masks. (Plain manila file folders or kraft paper and markers make quick, easy masks.) For the old lady, hang a huge dress on an old lamp pole. Hang the old lady's face mask over the shade. Have a stage hand hiding behind the dress, gradually filling it with pillows or balloons. Add music and dance as well. Several different tunes have been printed in children's songbooks, but encourage students to invent tunes as well. Assign some children the job of identifying and reproducing animal sound effects.

Connect the story to literature by asking students to remember and recite other songs, poems and stories in which actions are added on to each other. For example, sing "Old McDonald" or read the poem "This is the House that Jack Built." Encourage children to invent similar stories of their own.

Other videos and films with "add-on" folk stories or rhymes available from Weston Woods include:

**THE NAPPING HOUSE**, by Audrey Wood, illustrated by Don Wood

**WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ IN PEOPLE'S EARS**, by Verna Aardema, illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon

**ZIN! ZIN! ZIN! A VIOLIN**, by Lloyd Moss, illustrated by Marjorie Priceman

A video with the opposite technique (and by the same author/illustrator) —subtracting items—is the following:

**JOSEPH HAD A LITTLE OVERCOAT**, by Simms Taback

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