

When the Zoo Followed Me Home

Teaching Notes

Author: Claire E. Peters

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Synopsis:

After a trip to the zoo, a young boy discovers the animals have followed him home—and are hiding around the house! There's a lion by the couch, a bat on the ceiling, and even an elephant in the garage! With all these animals around, there isn't much room, and with a baby due soon, this little boy will soon learn that there can be space for everyone. *When the Zoo Followed Me Home* is a delightfully illustrated and whimsical story that explores imagination, discovery, and growing as a family.

In the classroom:

BEFORE READING

Exploring the Cover:

- What can children see on the cover?
 - What animals can you spot?
 - Where are they?
- How does the cover make you feel?
 - Why is this?
- What do you think the story will be about?
- If you could bring home an animal from the zoo, which one would it be?
- Have you ever been to a zoo?
 - What was your favourite animal?
- If you had a pet elephant or giraffe, where would it sleep?
- Have you ever imagined something that wasn't really there?
- How would you feel if your house was suddenly full of animals?

DURING READING

Personal, Social & Emotional Development (PSED)

- How does the child feel about all the animals arriving?
- Why do you think the child is keeping the animals a secret from their parents?
- Do you think the animals are real, or are they part of the child's imagination?
- Have you ever felt unsure about something new, like starting school or meeting a new family member?
- How does the child's feeling change from the start of the book to the end?

Understanding the World (UTW)

- What different animals are there in the story?
 - Where can you find these animals in the wild?
- How do animals move differently? (Flamingos stand, snakes slither, bats hang.)
- What do you think these animals would eat in real life?
 - Would they eat the same things at home?
- What happens when a family gets bigger?
 - What does a new sibling need?

Science

- What do animals need to survive?

- Would a giraffe or any of the other animals be happy in a house?
- Why or why not?
- What are the different places that animals live? (Birds have nests, meerkats live underground.)
- What do you think would happen if animals don't have enough space?
 - How would this make them feel?

Literacy

- Listen for rhymes – Can children hear words that sound the same? (e.g., "room" and "broom")
- What describing words (adjectives) does the author use for the animals?
- What would you do if a zoo followed you home? How would you tell the story?

AFTER READING

Analysis and Interpretation:

- What happened in the story?
 - Can you retell it in your own words?
- Why do you think the animals had to go back to the zoo?
- How did the child feel about the baby before and after the animals arrived?
- What did the animals help the child understand?
- Do you think the child was imagining the animals or really seeing them?

PSED - Reflection

- Have any children ever felt nervous or excited about something new?
- What makes you feel safe at home? (A pet, a stuffed toy, family members?)
- What would you say to the child in the story about getting a new sibling?

Art and Creativity:

- Ask children to draw a picture of what their house would look like if animals followed them home.
- Make up a new ending—what if the animals didn't want to leave?
- Children imagine that they are one of the zoo animals—ask them to write or act out what they would say about their adventure.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Movement & Drama – "Move Like an Animal"

- Call out different animals from the story, and ask children move like them (slither like a snake, stomp like an elephant, hop like a possum).

Science & Sorting – "Where Do They Live?"

- Print pictures of the animals in the story. Ask children to sort them into categories:
 - Animals that live in the jungle, savanna, ocean, or underground.
 - Animals that could live in a house vs. those that wouldn't fit!

Math & Spatial Awareness – "Can an Elephant Fit in a Bathtub?"

- Use blocks or paper cutouts to measure different classroom objects. Compare sizes of zoo animals:
 - Could a giraffe fit inside the classroom?
 - How big is an elephant compared to a bathtub?

Writing & Imagination – "The Day the Aquarium Followed Me Home"

- Ask children to write their own story that takes place in a different environment (aquarium, farm, dinosaur park). What would follow them home? Where would they hide?

Art & Observation – "Hidden Animals"

- Ask children to draw a picture of their home—but hide several zoo animals inside. See if your classmates can find them!

Emotional Awareness – "What Helps You Feel Safe?"

- Discuss things that make us feel safe (stuffed toys, nightlights, hugs, routines).
- Ask children to draw or write about something that makes them feel comforted.

About the Author:

Claire E. Peters has been living and breathing stories since she was a young girl. Understanding the lasting impact that a childhood book can have on a reader, she's been inspired to create tales that evoke a sense of magic and emotion in both children and adults alike. Claire lives in Australia with her husband and two young children. Together, they keep a watchful eye out for any sneaky zoo animals that may be hiding around their home.

About the Illustrator:

Chiara Franceschetti has always loved drawing. Originally a graduate of architecture, she began her creative career after having two children. Inspired by the mountainous surroundings of her childhood, fairy tales, and travel, Chiara works digitally, often combining watercolours to form detailed and joyfully coloured artwork. Chiara lives in South Tyrol, Italy, with her husband and two children.