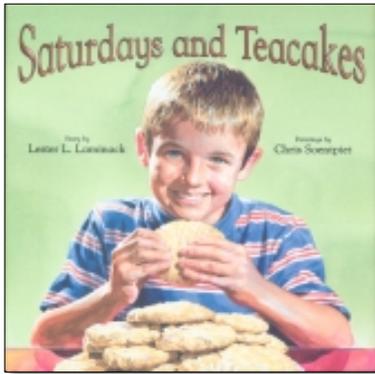


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Saturdays and Teacakes

Written by Lester L. Laminack | Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet

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Ages 4-8 | Realistic Fiction

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ABOUT THE BOOK

“When I was nine or ten years old I couldn’t wait for Saturdays. I got up early, dressed, and rolled my bicycle out of the garage.”

So begins author Lester Laminack’s poetic memory of the adult who made him feel incredibly special—his grandmother. Every Saturday the narrator, a young boy, rides his bicycle up and down country roads past farms, a graveyard, and a filling station, until he reaches his beloved Mammaw’s house where she is waiting for him. While she picks tomatoes, he pushes the lawn mower through the dew-wet grass. Afterwards, he always helps her make teacakes from scratch, breaking the eggs and stirring the batter. But the best part is eating the hot, sweet cakes fresh from the oven. Award-winning illustrator Chris Soentpiet’s images beautifully capture the relationship and the place, perfectly depicting the simplicity of an earlier time.

THEMES

- Memoir writing/memories
- Nostalgia/past times
- Grandparents
- Baking
- Teacakes

BEFORE YOU READ

- Ask your students to examine the front cover and the art throughout the book. As you examine the cover, note the title and take a close look at the boy on the front and back of the book jacket.

- Invite your students to think about the following questions:
 1. Why does the author use the plural—Saturdays?
 2. What could this imply about the story?
 3. What do you think teacakes are?
 4. What do Saturdays and teacakes have in common?
- Ask your students to make close observations of the boy’s clothing, the sunlight filtering through the trees, and the bicycle. Now invite them to wonder with you about these questions:
 1. What time of year might it be?
 2. Where could this boy be going?
 3. What could he be planning to do?
- Now take a picture walk through the book. Turn the pages and carefully examine the art. Linger with the images and the story they can evoke in the viewer’s imagination. Pause and wonder, talk, and form theories as you move through the richly detailed images. Invite your students to wonder with you about the following points:
 - The boy’s attitude about his journey
 - The boy’s destination
 - The time period in which the story is set
 - The location or region in which the story is set
 - The distance the boy travels
 - The amount of time it must take him to reach his destination
 - The identity of the characters depicted in the art
 - The relationship between the boy and others in the images
 - The role(s) of the dog and cat depicted in the art

As you move through the images and theories begin to emerge, ask your students to point to specifics in the art that can be used to support each theory.

- Then read the summary on the flap and ask your students to use that information to refine or confirm any theory formed from a first look at the art.

AS YOU READ

- Before moving into the story, take a moment to read the dedications. Ask your students to talk about what the author's dedication reveals about the origin of the story, the identity of the characters, and the relationship between them. Does this expand or confirm any theory from the picture walk? Ask what the illustrator's dedication reveals about the process he uses in creating the images for his books and whether they can confirm or expand a theory about the setting.
- In our classrooms and libraries, we want students to see themselves as capable individuals with stories of their own. One way we help students develop this identity is to let them see that writers and artists are ordinary people who once were boys and girls just like them. The work of writers and artists draws from many experiences like those in the lives of boys and girls who are reading these books. Knowing something about the writer and the artist and the story behind the book can give students a new lens for reading and viewing the story. The dedication and the "About the Author" and "About the Illustrator" information on the back flap can be rich sources for students.
- Now begin reading the story aloud, taking care to make the illustrations visible for your students as you are reading. The language and the art in a picture book should be taken in simultaneously. Remember that when you read aloud for a child or a group of children, you are a living demonstration of the art of reading. Take your time; don't rush the language or the art. Remember that your listeners are trying to build meaning from the marriage of language and art and that your voice is the instrument playing the music of the language listeners will hear. As the reader, you will need to pay careful attention to pace, tone, inflection, and rhythm. The mood of the story should float on the sound of your voice and should be depicted by the art.

AFTER YOU READ

- As you reach the last page of the story, close the book and ask the students, "So, what do you think?"

Asking an open-ended question like this implies that you see your students as people who think and reflect and make connections when engaging in a story.

Inviting their initial reactions also provides you with an opportunity to explore the connections they are making as readers or listeners.

- After the story, offer your students one or more of these invitations:
 - Retell the story. A child's retelling allows you to determine whether the essence of the story was captured and synthesized. If you notice that students want to repeat the story detail by detail, you might try demonstrating a summary. One way you could do this is to talk the summary across the fingers of one hand: simply tell the story in five big chunks that contain the essentials.
 - Share personal connections with the story. Most students are eager to share stories from their own lives that are prompted by some connection with the story we read aloud. Try to keep these connections on a topic level. For example, "That part where the boy stops by the tree to rest reminds me of the tree in my neighborhood. All us kids pretend it's a gas station and we ride our bikes up to it to fill up our gas tanks." However, if a student wants to tell a long story, you might suggest that it would make a great entry for his or her writer's notebook.
 - Talk about other stories this one reminds them of. This is one way to determine whether children understand patterns and relationships among various pieces of literature (plots, characters, settings, tone, theme, etc.) and the patterns or craft in the writing (organization/structure, focus/topic, voice/style, use of detail/support/elaboration, use of conventions, sense of audience, etc.). When students make these textual connections, you might assist them in looking for other books that share similar features and building a text set that could be used to study writer's craft, theme, or genre.
 - Talk about what they noticed during the reading. These observations about the writer's craft, the use of language, choice of words, style, voice, or about the art, style of painting, use of light or color, addition of details to enrich the story all allow you to determine whether students are listening or reading like writers. These connections and insights serve as powerful sources for focus lessons in the writing workshop. Make note of these and ask students to give

examples of what they notice. Take the time to flesh out their connections by naming the move a writer makes and helping the children to see why a writer makes the decision to include that move in the story. For example, in this story the author uses the repeated phrase “pedal, pedal, pedal” to give the reader a sense of perpetual motion and to help the reader notice the distance traveled and the time that passes in the journey between the boy’s house and his grandmother’s house.

This simple repetition allows the author to avoid naming every single house, street, and landmark that the boy passes along the way.

- Talk about wonderings. As students read or listen for themselves, questions will naturally arise about the content of the story, the vocabulary used, the relationships among characters, the setting (time and place). Children will wonder about the writer’s life and the source of the story idea. They will be curious about the relationship between the writer and the illustrator. This talk will open opportunities for clarifying confusions, extending insights, validating assumptions, and making new connections. Students can gain many more understandings from sharing other readers’ responses than they can from reading in isolation.
- In each of the above invitations, the focus remains on the student as reader or listener and the connections each individual is making with the story. Clearly the teacher or librarian is one of those in the reading/listening community, and his or her connections and insights are also valuable to the conversation. Remember, though, that the teacher’s role is to lead students toward independent thinking and reflection, toward learning to be receptive to the ideas and questions of others, and toward considering all voices as they make personal decisions about meaning. Strive to make yours *one of* the voices and not *the* voice in these conversations.

THINKING LIKE WRITERS

- When you have read the book aloud, ask the students to turn to a partner and talk briefly about something they noticed with their ears. Explain that you want them to talk about ways the writer used words, things they heard in the language, as the story was read aloud. Give them two or three minutes and then ask them to share some of the things they noticed. Make note on a whiteboard or a chart of what they have noticed.
- When you have listed four or five items, return to the

list and ask the students to think like a writer. Ask them to offer a theory about why the writer chose to include each feature. For example, children might notice the repetition of “pedal, pedal, pedal,” and you would ask them to consider the job that feature does in the story.

1. How does it help the reader make sense of the story?

2. How does it help the writer to tell his story?

Noticing the ways of writers, the crafting work they do, is important. But if we expect our students to understand those moves on a level of use, then we must help them to also understand that each crafting technique is more than decoration to make the story sound good or look better. Other examples of the writer’s craft:

- Repetition of the words “every Saturday”
- Use of sound—*whoosh, crrriick-craaaack*
- Use of brand names (Red Diamond, Golden Eagle Syrup)
- Use of specific street names and the names of people who live in the houses along the route
- Use of metaphor and simile—“...sunlight poured through the windows like a waterfall and spilled over the countertops, pooling up on the checkerboard floor.”
- Invite the students to take a look at the text and search for other moves the writer makes. This time look for those you notice with your eyes. Repeat the process of naming each of these moves and exploring the work each move does for the reader and writer. Here are some possibilities:
 - Stacking words rather than stringing them out in a sentence. For example, return to the passage where the boy is approaching his grandmother’s drive. Notice that as he counts the driveways he is passing, the words are stacked like this:

“One...
two...
three...
four driveways and one last turn to the left.”
 - Notice the use of italics and formulate a theory to explain what the italics are to signify.
 - Note the absence of quotation marks and talk through why the writer chose to exclude them.
 - Notice how the words *car house* are followed by a statement in parentheses. Locate the one other place where this technique is used and formulate a theory to explain why.

Each of these moves—those you notice with your ears and those you notice with your eyes—are deliberate and

carefully planned. Noticing them, talking about how they help the reader make meaning and how they help the writer tell his story, will also help students sharpen their skills as writers.

REVIEWS

“Readers will have a hard time resisting this cover... this nostalgic look back offers up the childhood many of us wish we’d had.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“...the pictures are gorgeous, and the bond between child and grandparent is timeless.”

—*Booklist*

“Drawing on his childhood in Heflin, AL, the author splendidly recreates these nostalgic scenes, carefully bringing the memories to life by describing the sunny kitchen, the crunch of gravel under bicycle wheels, and the sweet aroma of the cakes.

The brilliant watercolor paintings glow with light and idyllically capture the world of yesteryear.”

—*School Library Journal*

AWARDS

- Children’s Book Sense Picks
- Read-Alouds Too Good to Miss (primary) —AIME
- Annual Exhibition of the Society of Illustrators
- Kansas State Reading Circle Recommended Reading List (primary)
- Volunteer State Book Award —Tennessee Master Reading List

Available from Lester L. Laminack:

Jake’s 100th Day of School
Saturdays and Teacakes
Snow Day!
The Sunsets of Miss Olivia Wiggins
Three Hens and a Peacock
Trevor’s Wiggly-Wobbly Tooth

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Chris Soentpiet graduated with honors from the Pratt Institute of Art in New York City, where he majored in fine arts and minored in education. He has illustrated numerous books for children. A native of Korea, he lives in New York.

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Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for
SATURDAYS AND TEACAKES
 prepared by Lester L. Laminack

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Mammaw Thompson's Teacakes

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Gather these ingredients (Mammaw always used these brands, but you can substitute your own brands):

- 2 sticks of Blue Bonnet margarine
- 3½ cups of Martha White self-rising flour
- 2 cups of Dixie Crystals sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 3 teaspoons of vanilla flavoring

2. Blend margarine and sugar until creamy. Beat eggs and blend. Add vanilla, then flour, and blend. (You can blend the ingredients with a potato masher, then stir with a long wooden spoon.) Gather the mixture into a loose ball and sprinkle lightly with flour.

3. Lightly flour the surface you'll use for rolling, then roll out the dough.

4. Next remove about half of the dough onto the cutting surface and roll it out with a rolling pin to a thickness of about ¼ inch. Cut circles in the dough with a teacup, glass, or cookie cutter about 2-3 inches in diameter. (Dip the rim of the cup in flour between cuttings to prevent the dough from sticking.)

5. Place the circles on a baking sheet that has been lightly buttered or use a nonstick baking sheet. Set the cookies about 1 inch apart on all sides. Sprinkle sugar lightly over each cookie.

6. Repeat for the second half of the dough. (Refrigerate the dough if it will sit for more than 10 minutes. Chilled dough is easier to roll out and cut.) This recipe should produce a batch of about 40 teacakes.

7. Place the cookies in the preheated oven for about 15 minutes. The cookies are done when they are lightly browned. Remove them from the oven and let them cool a little before you lift them off the baking sheet to eat them.

I hope you make teacakes with someone you love very much. That's when they taste the very best.

Recipe from the book *Saturdays and Teacakes*, written by Lester L. Laminack and illustrated by Chris Soentpiet.