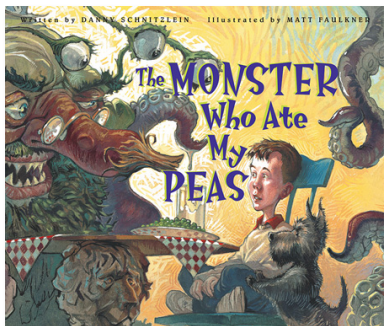


TEACHER'S GUIDE



The Monster Who Ate My Peas

Written by Danny Schnitzlein | Illustrated by Matt Faulkner

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Ages 4–8 | Fantasy

AR • RC • Lexile • F&P • GRL O; Gr 3

ABOUT THE BOOK

How far would you go to avoid facing your fears? Sometimes we go so far, we create situations worse than those we're trying to escape. The boy in *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* makes a wish for his dreaded peas to disappear and faces a “Twilight Zone” dilemma when a monster appears, offering to get rid of the peas...for a price!

Author Danny Schnitzlein draws from his own childhood aversion to peas to create a story that helps the reader to examine his or her own fears, and to discover that fears are often based on invented or inflated truths that have no basis in reality. When the monster asks for the boy's dog in return for eating the dreaded peas, the boy must decide which is more important to him. This story can help us see how our choices build character and determine who we really are.

THEMES

- Facing fears
- Actions and consequences
- Responsibility
- Character
- Courage

BEFORE YOU READ

- Ask your listeners what foods they don't like to eat. Remind them that this story is drawn from the author's childhood fear of peas.
- Ask your listeners to look at the cover of the book and guess what the story might be about.

AS YOU READ

Pause occasionally to ask your listeners how they think the boy is feeling.

AFTER YOU READ

- Ask your listeners to retell the story in their own words.
- Talk about fears with your listeners. “What are you afraid of? What do you do to stop being afraid?” (The author of the book was once afraid of eating peas, but had to re-examine his fear when he ate what he thought was avocado soup and liked it. Then he discovered it was actually pea soup!)
- Ask students to think about why hearing about other people's fears can make our own seem less ferocious. (If you wish, discuss your own fears with your listeners.)
- Discuss the difference between “reputation” and “character.” Simply put, “reputation” is what other people think of you and “character” is the way you view yourself from the inside. How did the boy's character change when he ate the peas? How do you think he felt about himself after facing his fear?
- Ask your listeners these questions: Do you think the boy in the story got back his belongings at the end of the story? Why do you think he should or shouldn't get them back?
- Discuss actions, consequences, and responsibility. Ask your listeners to give definitions of each, in their own words. Talk about these concepts in relation to the story.

- Ask students to write a story about an incident from their own lives that taught them something about responsibility or about consequences.
- Have students look for things in the illustrations that aren't mentioned in the text. (Some examples: the little sister or the monster on the last page.) Discuss how the illustrator uses the dog, Ralph, to tell readers how to feel about the monster.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

VISUAL ARTS

- Dr. Seuss often doodled to get ideas for his stories. Encourage students to use their imaginations by doing the following activity: Doodle on a piece of paper, then write a short rhyming poem about what you just drew.
- People of all ages love monsters. Ask students to do one or both of the following activities:
 - Draw or build a monster that has never been seen before. (Students might use objects such as buttons, leaves, fabric, pipe cleaners, or modeling material. Air-drying clays like DAS allow the monster to be painted after drying.) Give the monster an appropriate name.
 - Write a story about the monster you created. Was this monster always a monster? If not, how did he become a monster? Is the monster truly evil or does he just look scary?

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Ask your listeners to define the following words from *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* and compose sentences using each word:
 1. mysterious
 2. gruesome
 3. bloated
 4. writhe
 5. candid
 6. torso
 7. quiver
 8. boorish
 9. gaze
- Use the following activities to help students understand poetry:
 - Discuss rhyme patterns—ABAB or AABB, for instance—and limericks. Which pattern is used in *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*?
 - Note how the meter and phrasing of *The Monster*

Who Ate My Peas is the same as that of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* by Clement C. Moore and *Horton Hears a Who* by Dr. Seuss. How do poetry and rhyming help stories to be more like music?

- Read some poems from some of these rhyming authors: Dr. Seuss, Jack Prelutsky, Shel Silverstein, Ogden Nash, or Jeff Moss. Notice how they often end their poems with a joke or a surprise. Can you find examples of alliteration in their poems?
- Have students write 20 pairs of words that rhyme (or do it as a class), then use those words as a springboard to write a limerick or poem.
- Greek and Roman myths often featured stories about monsters. (The hydra, the minotaur, the harpies, Medusa, and the Cyclops are some examples.) Sometimes myths were written purely as entertainment and sometimes they were written to explain natural phenomena. Ask students to do one or more of the following activities:
 - Read “Theseus and the Minotaur” or “Perseus and Medusa.” (Or read a myth aloud to the class.)
 - Create a myth to explain a natural phenomenon like lightning or fog and write a paragraph about it. (Some examples: Why doesn't a snake have legs? What are clouds? Why does the moon have phases?)
 - Create a monster myth and write a paragraph about it. (Some examples of questions to cover: What is your monster's name? How was it created? Where does it live?)
- Places all over the world have their own monster legends. (Bigfoot, sea monsters, vampires, dragons, the Loch Ness monster, the Yeti, ghosts, El Chupacabra, the Skunk Ape, for example.) Ask students to choose one of the following assignments:
 - Research a monster legend and write a report on it. Do you believe this legendary monster exists or is it imaginary? Make a case one way or the other.
 - Make up your own legendary monster. Write an article about it as it might appear in a newspaper. When and where was it first sighted and by whom? What does it look like? What times of day is it usually spotted?
 - You are a Monster Hunter, hot on the trail of an elusive monster, never seen before. Describe the monster's appearance, where it lives, and what it eats. Draw a picture of it. Write up the report of your investigation.

- Creating an interesting or convincing character gives your story a focus and tells you what your story needs to be about. Have your listeners create a character by answering the following questions: (There are no wrong answers. It's okay if they want to make the character a monster or animal, but they'll be able to identify more with the characters if they are like them.)
 1. Is your character a boy or girl?
 2. How old is your character?
 3. How does your character look?
 4. What is your character's name? (Remind students that names, like Ichabod Crane, can tell us something about the character.)
 5. What is your character's talent? What's he/she good at? What can she do better than all her friends?
 6. What is your character's greatest fear?
 7. What does your character want more than anything in the world? (Remind students that not all desires are for tangible things. For example: the desire to make friends at a new school.)
 8. What is preventing your character from getting the thing he or she wants most? (Remind students that this will provide the conflict in your story. What would Star Wars be without Darth Vader?)
 9. Encourage students to make up additional questions and think about more things to describe their characters. (Some examples: the character's best friend, pets, home life, personal habits, etc.)

Ask students to write a story about the character they have created. Remind them how the kernel of the story is contained in the character. (Or, you might say, how the story is entwined in the character's DNA.)
- *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* was inspired by Danny Schnitzlein's childhood fear of eating peas. Writing from one's own experience makes a story more powerful because one is drawing on real emotions and sensory information. Ask students to start with the words "I remember..." and write a story about something that happened to them at any time in their lives. Make sure to use description, which engages the senses. At that moment, how did things look, smell, sound, feel, and taste?
- *Grendel*, by John Gardner, is the story of Beowulf written from the monster's point of view. Ask students to write a well-known story from the antagonist's point of view. (Some possibilities: Tell Little Red Riding Hood from the wolf's perspective, Hansel and Gretel from the witch's point of view, or Jack and the Beanstalk from the giant's point of view.)

GEOGRAPHY

- Look at a map or globe and find these places named in *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*:
 - Bali, Indonesia
 - Raleigh, North Carolina, USA
 - Chile, South America
 - Sweden, Europe
- Ask students to research these places and answer the following questions: On what continent is each place located? Which of these places is farthest away from your town? Which of these places are countries? Which are cities? Which one is an island? (You may come up with many more such questions.)
- Ask students to do further research on one of these places and write a report about it.
- Ask your listeners to research foods that are eaten by children in another part of the world. What do kids eat in Japan, China, Indonesia, South America, Russia, Croatia, Chile, Mexico? Which of these foods do you think kids would or wouldn't like to eat?
- Ask students to write a report on the foods of one of these places.

SCIENCE

Humans view certain animal predators as "monsters." Ask students to research a "monstrous" animal and write a report. (Some examples: shark, crocodile, alligator, snake, lion, cheetah, leopard, lion, tiger, panther, wolf, coyote, grizzly bear, komodo dragon, etc.) Make sure students include these details in their reports:

1. Does this animal have any natural enemies?
2. Do humans interact with this animal?
3. Have humans affected the population of this animal?
4. If this animal were to become extinct, what would happen to the other plants and animals in its food chain?
5. In your opinion, is this animal a "monster" or not?

REVIEWS

“Arcimboldo meets *Mad Magazine* as a monster that looks like a cross between an octopus and a compost pile bargains with a young narrator willing to sacrifice his prized soccer ball, and even his new bike, rather than eat peas... there’s a Seussian (or Clement Clarke Moore) flavor to the rhymed text... the rollicking rhythms and madcap, over-the-top art give this... [book] plenty of comic energy.”

—**Kirkus Reviews**

“...This is a fun way to get your child to try new things and teach them about consequences. The illustrations are well done and while involve monsters, nothing scary enough to induce nightmares. I enjoyed the rhyming in the book—which in some can put me to sleep rather than keep me interested—and the repetition of the consequences of taking shortcuts...”

—**The Pampered Lamb blog**

“...The author must have a hilarious imagination to write such a fun rhyming tale. So did the illustrator in creating the perfect characters for the tale, especially the grotesque monster, the darling baby and cute puppy. Kids will want to read or have this book read to them over and over again.”

—**It’s About Time, MaMaw blog**

“Illustrated in muted, muddy earth tones, this fanciful, award-winning book features clever rhyming prose and emotion-laden imagery. It’s a great book for encouraging kids to try new foods.”

—**Janet Boyer blog**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Danny Schnitzlein’s first book, *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*, received the Young Hoosier Book Award and was nominated for readers’ choice awards in several states. Danny also writes scripts and songs for children’s educational television. In his spare time he loves playing guitar, reading, painting, and movies. He lives in the Atlanta area with his wife and son.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Matt Faulkner has illustrated many children’s books, including *The Monster Who Ate My Peas*. In addition to writing and illustrating books for children, Faulkner also creates illustrations for national newspapers and magazines and teaches illustration at the Center for Creative Studies. He lives in southeastern Michigan with his son and their cat.

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Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for
THE MONSTER WHO ATE MY PEAS
prepared by Danny Schnitzlein

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