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Activity Guide

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There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly

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ABOUT THE STORY

In this retelling of the old song, an old lady swallows ever larger animals in order to get rid of the fly she swallowed originally. Die-cut holes show the growing menagerie in the old lady's stomach.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Simms Tabak was born in the Bronx, New York, and received an art degree from Cooper Union in New York City. He has created posters, calendars, and greeting cards as well as picture books such as the Caldecott Medal-winner *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*, another Live Oak Readalong. Simms Tabak lives in Willow, New York, with his wife.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if any of them have ever accidentally – or on purpose! – swallowed a bug. Explain that the book they will read is about a lady who swallowed a fly, and a few other things as well.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

“What does the old lady swallow to catch the fly?”

“Why does the old lady swallow the cat?”

“What does the old lady swallow to catch the dog?”

“What happens when the old lady swallows the horse?”

“What is the second thing the old lady swallows? The fourth thing?”
(Order events)

“Do you think the song is funny? If so, what makes it funny for you?”
(Analyze)

Vocabulary

These colloquialisms from the story have meanings that are different from the meanings of the words in them. Write them on the chalkboard and help children define them. Then ask them to use each colloquialism in a sentence.

wolf down
on the sly

the whole hog
missed out

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: Bird Species

When the old lady swallows a bird, the artist shows a number of different bird species, all labeled. Ask children to find information on one of the types of birds in a field guide or book about birds. They can tell the rest of the class what they learn about the bird's habits and habitat.

Health: Milk Products Race

On the page where the old lady swallows the cow, the artist shows many milk products. Have children work in groups to list the products shown and as many other milk products as they can. The group that lists the most milk products in five minutes wins the race.

Music: Beyond the Song

Have children work together to come up with additional verses for the song, featuring ever larger animals. Encourage them to structure the new verses the way the old verses are structured. Children can sing their new verses when they are finished.

Math: Ordering by Size

Have children work in groups to make their own cutouts of the animals the old lady swallowed. Encourage them to label each animal with an approximate height. Then have them order the animals from smallest to largest.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Dog Breeds

The artist shows and labels many different breeds of dogs on the page where the old lady swallows a dog. Children can work in groups to learn about one the dog breeds. Using the breed name as a keyword, have them find a website that tells them where the dog originated, its size, its use, and other interesting facts.