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Activity Guide

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Crow Boy

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ABOUT THE STORY

Chibi, or “Tiny Boy”, as he is called by his classmates, has no friends in school. Other students think he is strange when he sits alone observing insects or birds. It isn’t until he reaches the sixth grade that a wise teacher shows the school how Chibi is special, and Chibi earns himself the new name of “Crow Boy”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR / ILLUSTRATOR

Imprisoned in 1939 for his opposition to his government’s militaristic policies, Taro Yashima escaped from Japan to the United States. His sensitive art and haunting stories have beguiled many young readers of his books *Seashore Story*, *Umbrella*, *The Village Tree*, and *Momo’s Kitten*.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask the children how they think they might feel if they were meeting a new teacher and a classroom full of unfamiliar faces. Encourage them to discuss why they would have those feelings. Then tell them that this story is about a boy who feels afraid and alone when he starts school in his village in Japan, and how he earns the name Crow Boy.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “Why did none of the other children know Chibi?”
- “Chibi made his eyes cross-eyed so that he would not see certain things. What are some of the things he did not want to see?”
- “What are some of the things Chibi did to kill time and amuse himself?”
- “At the beginning of the story, why do you think Chibi hid under the schoolhouse?” (Draw conclusions)
- “After Chibi performed at the talent show, why did the children and grown-ups cry?” (Make inferences)
- “How do you think Chibi felt about being called Crow Boy?” (Make inferences)

Vocabulary

After they have listened to the story, discuss with the children definitions of the following words:

attendance	grubs	admired
forlorn	trudging	imitate
amuse	amazed	

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: Map of Japan

Ask the children to work in small groups to create maps of Japan. Provide them with atlases or encyclopedias from which to work. Children can label as many of the islands as possible. Display their work in the classroom.

Science: All About Crows

Provide the children with books and encyclopedias so they can find out information about crows. Ask each child to find three interesting facts about crows. They can report on their facts to the rest of the group.

Art: Drawing in Black and White

Chibi created black and white drawings, which his teacher hung in the classroom. Ask children to make their own drawings in black and white. Encourage them to draw a scene from nature, and hang their drawings in the classroom.

Language Arts: Writing Haiku Poetry

Review with the children the structure of haiku poetry, a major form of Japanese verse, consisting of three lines containing five, seven, and five syllables respectively. Many haiku refer in some way to the seasons of the year. Ask the children to write haiku of their own. Their poems can be about the seasons or about a topic of their choice.

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.

Japanese Food

Chibi brought a rice ball to school for his lunch every day. Ask children to use the keywords *Japanese food* to find a recipe on the Internet for another Japanese dish. Children can copy the recipe and collect the recipes together in a Japanese cookbook.