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Activity Guide

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El Cuento De Ferdinando

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ABOUT THE STORY

A young calf prefers to sit in the shade of his favorite tree and smell the flowers while all the other young bulls run, jump, and butt their heads together in hopes of being chosen for the bull fights in Madrid. When some men come to select a bull for the fights, Ferdinand heads off on his own to smell the flowers. He unsuspectingly sits on a bee, gets stung, and jumps around in such a fit that the men select him as the fiercest of all the bulls in the pasture. They are sadly disappointed with his performance in the ring, and Ferdinand is returned to his pasture home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Munro Leaf, author and illustrator of dozens of children's books, is best remembered for his signature character, Ferdinand, the Spanish bull who preferred smelling flowers to fighting in a ring in Spain. In 1935, Leaf decided to write a children's story. In less than one hour, Leaf composed the beloved 800-word story as it stands today. Since Leaf's death in 1976 at age 71, Ferdinand continues to charm children worldwide as the simple story is retold in more than 60 language translations.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Robert Lawson was born in New York City in 1892 and grew up in Montclair, New Jersey. Lawson started illustrating books in 1930. His book *Rabbit Hill* won the Newbery Award in 1945. Robert Lawson died in 1957.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Tell the children that Ferdinand is a young bull who is different from the other young bulls. While they run around butting heads and practice being fierce for the bull ring in Spain, Ferdinand sits quietly in the shade of a tree and smells the flowers. Explain that in Spain, where Ferdinand lives, bullfighting is a popular event in which a man armed with a sword and wearing a red cape fights against a bull. Ferdinand, despite his gentle and quiet personality, is selected to fight in the bullring in Madrid. This is his story.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

Have the children answer the following questions.

1. How was Ferdinand different from other bulls his age? (*He would rather sit and smell flowers than be in a bull fight.*)
2. How did Ferdinand's mother react to the fact that he was not like the other bulls? (*She worried that he'd be lonely, but when she saw that he wasn't, she just let him sit there and be happy.*)
3. If he wasn't interested in fighting, why did Ferdinand act so ferociously in front of the men who had come looking for the meanest bull? (*He sat on a bee.*)
4. Why were the matador and his fellow bullfighters upset with Ferdinand? (*They wanted to fight so that they could show off to the crowd.*)

Language Arts: Accent Marks

Write the following words from the story on the board and explain that what they have in common is accent marks. Discuss accent marks and how they show which syllable should be emphasized or stressed when pronouncing a word. As you pronounce each word aloud have the group repeat it.

vivía árbol únicos dejó decía volvió pacarías círculos después

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Geography: Where in the World Is Madrid, Spain?

Using a map or globe, locate Spain. Give children photocopies of the country and have them color in Spain. Label the capital, Madrid.

Mexican Traditions: Individuality and Acceptance

Ask students to recall how Ferdinand differed from the other bulls. Did it bother him that he was different? Discuss the importance of being oneself and the need to respect and judge people as individuals. Have each child design a poster about themselves to celebrate themselves.

Science: Animal Rights

In the story, not only are the young bulls prodded and poked to anger them, but the horses used by the Picadores are so skinny that all of their bones are sticking out. Discuss animal welfare. Is this a good example of respecting animals? What could be done to make the bulls' and horses' lives better? What do animals need to be happy and healthy? (food, water, affection, shelter, etc.)

Science/Art: Flower Fun

Ferdinand loves to smell flowers. Bring in a variety of flowers and allow the children to smell them. Describe their scents. Have children make an illustration of their favorite flower, and then draw Ferdinand sitting next to it. Display around the room or on a bulletin board.

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.

Have children research *bullfighting* on the Internet. Is it practiced today? What is the *Running of the Bulls* about? What conditions do the bulls live in? Use the information gathered to create an educational display (such as a diorama, poster, or clay model) to share with the rest of the class.