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Activity Guide

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Emma's Pet

ABOUT THE STORY

Emma, a young bear, decides that she wants a new, cuddly pet. On her search she considers several candidates, including a bug, snake, and turtle, but none are cuddly enough to be her pet until she finds the cuddliest pet of all right at home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

David McPhail's favorite pastime was drawing from the time he was just two years old. In 1963, David enrolled in the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston. And in 1966, while working as a shipping clerk in a book clearinghouse, he rediscovered children's books. He spent hours looking through the many picture books that crossed his desk, and soon began his new career. His first book, *The Bear's Toothache*, was published in 1972. Since then, he has written and/or illustrated more than fifty books; many featuring bears and pigs, and is hard at work on many more. Mr. McPhail currently resides in Massachusetts.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask the group if any of them own pets, and if they do, to describe them. Explain that in this story, Emma is looking for a big, soft, cuddly pet. Have students make predictions about the kind of pet they think Emma will get.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- What was wrong with the pet Emma already had? (cat wasn't cuddly)
- Why didn't Emma keep the mouse? (wasn't big enough)
- Why wasn't Emma able to keep the frog? (took a bath with her mother)
- What was wrong with the snake? (too cuddly)
- What pet does Emma finally end up happy with? (father)

Vocabulary

Write these words on the chalkboard and review their meanings. Then ask volunteers to use the words in sentences.

cuddly anybody slippery belonged

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Language Arts: Now I Know My ABC's

Write the following words from the story on the board. Have volunteers help you rewrite them in alphabetical order.

Emma, pet, bug, turtle, cat, dog, father, snake

Home and Career Skills: Taking Care of Rover

Discuss with the group the responsibilities of pet care. What does a pet need? (food, water, love & attention, brushing, exercise, long-term commitment, etc.) What responsibilities go along with having a pet? For specific types of pets?

Home and Career Skills: Call a Professional

Expand on the activity above by inviting a representative from your local ASPCA or Humane Society to come speak with the group. Discuss their job roles, as well as animal care. (Many Humane Societies and animal shelters have free educational programs for children.)

Library & Research Skills: Which Pet to Choose

Have students imagine that they are going to choose a new pet. What types of questions do they need to answer before deciding what kind of pet is best for them? (How much time do they have for the pet? How expensive will it be to keep the pet?) Take the group to the library and have them research the type of pet they are interested in. Determine if it would be a good match for their lifestyle. Why or why not?

Social Studies: Ancient Pets?

Ask kids which animals they think were the first pets. Examine caveman drawings & Egyptian hieroglyphics for clues. Why were these animals favored?

Language Arts: Pet Show and Tell

Celebrate pets during National Be Kind to Animals Week in May. Arrange a pet show for after school or on the weekend. Perhaps join efforts with the PTA and turn it into a fundraiser. Have prizes for everyone in various categories.

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.

Pets

See the "Which Pet to Choose" and "Ancient Pets" activities above.

ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)

Visit the ASPCA's site for kids at www.animaland.org and kids learn more about this group.

David McPhail

Have students research this author. What two types of animals are most often featured in his books? How many books has he written? Where does he live? Does he have children of his own?