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Activity Guide

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Rotten Ralph Helps Out

ABOUT THE STORY

Sarah is learning about the ancient Egyptians. She brings Rotten Ralph the cat with her to the library to find ideas for a project on ancient Egypt. Ralph gets in so much trouble that they have to leave the library. Then he ruins Sarah's project. Now Sarah has nothing to show her teacher – but Ralph has an idea. Can he save the day?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack Gantos was born in Pennsylvania and was raised in Barbados and South Florida. He began working on picture books with an illustrator friend, Nicole Rubel, and they published the first book about Rotten Ralph book in 1976. He has also written collections of stories for middle-graders featuring his alter ego Jack Henry. He lives with his wife and daughter in Boston, Massachusetts.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nicole Rubel is known for her uniquely colorful illustrations and charming stories. Ms. Rubel received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Boston Museum School in association with Tufts University. Her first book, *Rotten Ralph*, earned her the children's book Showcase Award for Outstanding Graphic Design. She has since received awards from the American Book Association, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, and American Booksellers.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children what they know about ancient Egypt and the Egyptians. Write their responses on the chalkboard. Tell them that the book they will read is about a girl who is learning about ancient Egypt – and her cat Ralph, who makes it very hard to learn!

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Who was Cleopatra?"
- "What are two things the ancient Egyptians invented?"
- "What does Ralph do at the library?"
- "What does Ralph do to Sarah's statue?"
- "How does Ralph save the day?"
- "How does Ralph feel when Sarah is mad at him?" (*Make Inferences*)

Vocabulary

Write these words from the story in two columns on the chalkboard. Have children copy the columns and draw lines connecting each word to its definition.

ancient	horse-drawn vehicles
pyramid	tree-lined water hole
mummies	very old
oasis	preserved bodies

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Science: The Oasis

Have children look in encyclopedias or books about deserts to find out about oases. Ask them to work in small groups to write a brief report about the oasis: what it is, how it is formed, how it is used. Children can illustrate their reports with pictures of an oasis.

Art: Building a Pyramid

Ask children to work in small groups to research how a pyramid was built in ancient Egypt. Have them write the steps involved in building a pyramid and number the steps in order. Children can illustrate each step as they write.

Language Arts: Egyptian Writing

Sarah learns about Egyptian writing, or cuneiform. Have children develop their own pictograph writing in groups. Ask them to create a list of pictures with their definitions, and then to write a brief story using pictographs. Urge them to keep their pictures and stories very simple.

Science: Scarab Beetles

Sarah learns about Egyptian beetles, also known as scarab beetles. Have children work with partners to look in encyclopedias or books about insects to learn about scarab beetles and their role in ancient Egypt. Partners can give oral reports on the information they find out.

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.

The Sphinx

Using the keywords *great sphinx*, children can find information on this statue on the Internet. Have them answer two of the following questions:

- Where was the Sphinx built?
- When was the Sphinx built?
- How big was the Sphinx?
- What did the Sphinx represent?
- What is the Sphinx made of?
- How is the Sphinx being preserved?

Children can give brief reports to the class on the information they have found.