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Activity Guide

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The Mixed-Up Mask Mystery

ABOUT THE STORY

Fletcher the basset hound loves to nap, but when his owner gets involved in a masked ball to celebrate a new park, he reluctantly goes along. Someone is trying to ruin the ball, though. Some of the masks are destroyed, and then there's a fire. It's up to Fletcher to find out who is trying to make the ball a failure – and why.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Levy grew up reading a wide variety of books for children and adults. She graduated magna cum laude from Brown University and went on to earn a graduate degree from Columbia University. Levy has published more than 90 books for young readers, including fiction, nonfiction, young adult novels, and mysteries. She lives in New York.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Mordicai Gerstein is a painter, sculptor, and prize-winning designer and director of animated films. He attended the Chouinard Institute of Art before moving to New York City where he lived and worked for twenty-five years making animated films for television. Gerstein 's many picture books include *What Charlie Heard* and *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*, which won the Caldecott Medal; both are Live Oak Media readalongs. He has also illustrated *The Principal's on the Roof* and *A Hare-Raising Tale*, both Live Oak Media audiobooks featuring Fletcher the basset hound. Mordicai Gerstein lives in western Massachusetts with his wife and daughter.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they have ever been to a costume party. Encourage them to describe their costumes. Then tell them that the book they will read is about a dog who is invited to a costume ball, or dance.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- “Why is the ball being held?”
- “what happens to the masks?”
- “How does Fletcher let people know about the fire?”
- “How do you think Fletcher feels about Felicity?” (*Make Inferences*)
- “Were you surprised to learn who had caused the problems? Why or why not?” (*Draw Conclusions*)

Vocabulary

Write these words and definitions on the chalkboard. Have children copy each column and draw lines matching the words in Column A with the correct definition in Column B.

A
spectacular
antennae
solitary
media
distinctive

B
alone
special
amazing
insect's sensory organs
newspapers and TV

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Art: *Make a Mask*

The kids in the story make dog masks for the ball. Have children make their own dog masks. Provide them with construction paper, elastic thread, markers, scissors, and glitter and other decorations. Children can create dog masks of their own to decorate the classroom (after wearing them, of course).

Science: *Squirrel Habits*

The squirrels in the story are very pesky. Ask children to work in small groups to find out if real squirrels are as troublesome. Children can look in encyclopedias or other books to learn where squirrels live, what they eat, and how they behave. Have them prepare brief oral reports to give to the class.

Language Arts: *Thanking Mr. Fernbach*

Ask children to imagine that they have gone to the masked ball and now must thank their host for inviting them. Have them write thank-you notes to Mr. Fernbach, describing how they enjoyed themselves at the ball. Encourage children to use correct friendly letter form.

Science: *All about Fleas*

Jasper seems like a good friend to Fletcher, but are fleas really that appealing? Have children work with partners to learn all about fleas – where they are found, how they get their food, and what problems they cause. Pairs can write brief reports on the information they find.

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.

Different Dogs

Among the dogs that go to the masked ball are a *basset hound*, a *dachshund*, a *bulldog*, a *Chihuahua*, and a *Lhasa apso*. Have children choose one of these breeds to research on the Internet, using the breed's name as a keyword. They can jot down information on the breed, including what it looks like, where it is from, and how it behaves. If possible, have them print out a picture of the breed they have chosen. Children can share their information with the rest of the class.