

Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend

By Mélanie Watts

In this second book about Scaredy, a little squirrel with more than a few personality quirks, the main focal point of the story involves the fears that occur when we try to make new friends. The story is simple and is accompanied by a wonderful series of graphic organizers in the illustrations that make it an excellent tool for working into a writing lesson. Students of all ages will enjoy the book on several different levels.

English/Language Arts

Writing/Using Graphic Organizers: *Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend* has numerous examples of simple and effective graphic organizers that can be used individually or collectively in a writing organization lesson.

- Use the pages near the beginning of the book that make an inventory of individuals Scaredy is afraid will bite him. List making is a great tool for generating writing ideas; these two pages not only list but illustrate a series of creatures that cause the squirrel some fear and apprehension. This same idea is repeated with a list of activities Scaredy does to occupy his time. You can use the first graphic organizer to introduce the lesson; they are one-word nouns that make a clear illustration of a way to organize thoughts. Another list that follows uses the same simple illustrated list format, but it features seven extremely simple sentences. Both single nouns in the first and simple sentences in the second are sorted with the same type of graphic organizer. This makes an excellent compare/contrast example to show students ways to use the same format.
- Another graphic organizer, “The Perfect Friend,” found a page later, shows inductive reasoning. Students need this skill on the TAKS and other test, so it’s never too soon for a simple introduction. The attributes of the fish are highlighted by big red arrows. Discuss with students why Scaredy came to the conclusion that a goldfish might be a perfect friend, based on the facts about the fish. (For inductive reasoning, he started with the goldfish and gradually added elements about the fish to induce that the fish would make a perfect friend.)
- “How to Make the Perfect First Impression” uses a simple feature-description chart form to organize ideas. You might provide a variety of examples of this chart. You can attach a large picture of a dog or other animal to the board and surround it with descriptive terms or character traits. To help your students practice using this form of graphic organizer, you might provide your students with a simple outline of a person. You may use the one provided, or save paper by creating a pattern for students to trace. Have students add details about this person and then provide character attributes that they describe in sentences or phrases that surround the figure. Your students may describe their version of a perfect friend, a perfect sibling, a perfect teacher, or other idea.
- “The Perfect Plan” is actually an idea map, complete with Legend and a step-by-step plan for meeting the fish. Note with students how Scaredy added little asides that warn of potential problems that could happen, such as encountering a piranha-infested pond!
- Another type of list appears after “The Perfect Plan.” Scaredy warns his readers what NOT to do. Have your students turn this list of “do nots” into a paragraph. Students will have to add some comments, details, and/or information that would make a paragraph more interesting.

- The Risk Test is an interesting graphic organizer. A test format may help ease test-making anxieties, especially if the students create test graphics themselves. Students can learn a great deal about test-taking skills by studying how tests are made. Have students create a simple interview form that looks like a test form. Students may then give their “test” to other students in the class and share the information.

Writing/Organization Skills: With your students, look at the way the book is written. First the problem is stated – immediately. Scaredy doesn’t have a friend. The reasons are given as to why he has no friends, sometimes in detail. The author then goes on to tell how Scaredy keeps himself busy without having a friend. Soon the problem is tackled as Scaredy makes a plan to find a perfectly safe friend. After planning carefully, Scaredy heads out to find a friend, but all does not go according to plan! What Scaredy does to deal with the problem of the dog and how he makes a friend sum up the story. The fact that the story ends with a graphic organizer is worth pointing out to your students. The author continued her format throughout the story.

Integrated Mini-Lesson Idea/Adjectives: In the chart that features “The Perfect Friend,” you may want to change the adjective “perfect” to another word. In this manner, you are also integrating a brief lesson reinforcing the concept of adjectives. Maybe the students will describe the ideal friend. Look up the definitions of “perfect” and “ideal” with the class and discuss the slight difference in meaning.

Life Skills/Character Traits

Scaredy Squirrel’s quest for finding a friend is a great illustration for the character trait of “persistence.” Scaredy shows courage and careful planning as he works to solve his problem. This book is a good one to use when you want to talk with your class about the subject of friendship and how it can sometimes be difficult.