



MR. MEN & LITTLE MISS BOOKS by Roger Hargreaves

Reading Comprehension

Sequence

Determining the sequence of events in each of the books is an activity designed to aid literal comprehension. Students may be asked to recount the important events of the story individually, or to take turns in a group. The following keywords may be written on the blackboard, and the children are encouraged to use these words to indicate sequence:

at first _____ at last
then _____ finally
before _____ after
next _____ soon

A second activity that focuses on sequence presents students with the events of a story in a scrambled order. The task is to rewrite them in correct sequence:

1. Mr. Small decided that he wanted a job.
2. Mr. Small fell into a candy jar.
3. A man writes a children's book and calls it Mr. Small.
4. Mr. Small put mustard into mustard jars.
5. Mr. Robinson found Mr. Small waiting at the door.
6. Mr. Small told Walter the worm that he wanted a job.
7. Mr. Small sorted brown and white eggs.
8. The mailman rang the doorbell for Mr. Small.

ANSWER: 1,6,8,5,4,2,7,3

Cause and Effect

Helping children to understand these stories as a series of logical events can be accomplished by focusing on cause and effect. After a brief discussion to explain what these words mean in everyday life, students can work on an exercise derived from the contents of the Little Miss books.

Cause and Effect in Everyday Life

CAUSE

It is raining outdoors.
I had no breakfast
The water is very cold.

EFFECT

I wear a raincoat
I am very hungry
I won't go swimming.

A Matching Game

CAUSE

- 1 Little Miss Naughty played tricks on people.
2. Little Miss Scatterbrain forgot everything.
3. Little Miss Splendid thought she was too splendid to take the bus.
4. Little Miss Giggles lost her giggle.

EFFECT

- A. She went to the bank to buy sausages.
- B. Mr. Happy bought her a new one.
- C. The Mr. Men played a trick on her.
- D. She got stuck in the rain while walking home

ANSWERS: 1-C; 2-A; 3-D; 4-B

Riddles

In order to focus on characterization, an activity called *Who Am I* can be developed. Initially, the teacher can create short riddles about the characters and ask the class to guess who each one could be. Afterward the students themselves can create additional riddles.

Sample Riddles

1. I never can get enough of anything. I want more and more and more and more. Although my stomach bulges, I need the food on your plate, too. Who am I?
2. Everything in my home has a place. It is necessary for everything to be put exactly where it belongs. Especially silverware and teapots. Who am I?
3. I have so many questions about every little thing. How, when, why, and where are my favorite words. Who am I?
4. Whenever I'm around, people hold their ears. My walk makes houses tremble; my voice causes people to run for cover. Who am I?

ANSWERS: 1. Mr. Greedy; 2. Little Miss Neat; 3. Little Miss Curious; 4. Mr. Noisy

Fill-In

An excellent way to promote total comprehension is to present students with a fill-in exercise after each book has been completed. In this activity, a portion of the text is reproduced with specific words deleted. The teacher may delete every eighth word, or delete special nouns or verbs. Students are required to fill in the deletions with the exact word or an appropriate synonym.

Sample from Mr. Noisy (delete eighth word):

Mr. Noisy was a very, very noisy _____ indeed. For example: If Mr. Noisy were _____ this story to you, he'd be shouting _____ the top of his voice. And the _____ of Mr. Noisy's voice is a very _____ place. You can hear it a hundred _____ away!

OPTIONAL WORD CHOICE: loud, top, person, miles, at, reading

Sample from Little Miss Wise (noun deletions):

Little Miss Wise was as wise as an _____. Possibly two _____. Being so wise and sensible meant that _____ brushed her _____ every day, made her _____ every day, tidied her _____ every day, and did lots of other wise and sensible things.

OPTIONAL WORD CHOICE: bed, owl, teeth, house, owls, Little Miss Wise

Vocabulary Enrichment

Synonyms

Most of the Mr. Men and Little Miss books offer an opportunity to reinforce familiar words and discover their synonyms. For example, Little Miss Wise is called "sensible" and Mr. Busy is "rushing." Students may hunt for synonyms as they read each book, and teachers may prepare a synonym match when most of the books have been completed.

Synonym Match

1. neat
2. rush
3. noisy
4. chatterbox
5. small
6. giggle

- A. chuckle
- B. tidy
- C. tiny
- D. loud
- E. talkative
- F. hurry

ANSWERS: 1-B; 2-F; 3-D; 4-E; 5-C; 6-A

Antonyms

Students' vocabulary can be expanded by discovering words with opposite relationships within each of the books. For example, Little Miss Neat meets her match when Mr. Muddle and Mr. Messy come to visit. Students may search for antonyms independently, or teachers may prepare an antonym match based on the collection.

Antonym Match

1. neat
 2. happy
 3. brave
 4. noisy
 5. busy
 6. small
-
- A. scared
 - B. messy
 - C. tall
 - D. sad
 - E. quiet
 - F. lazy

ANSWERS: 1-B; 2-D; 3-A; 4-E; 5-F; 6-C

Occupations

Many of the secondary characters in the Mr. Men and Little Miss books have been given names that reflect their personalities or occupations. Students can be asked to match names with occupations.

Job Match Game

1. Doctor
2. Baker
3. Butcher
4. Librarian
5. Hat shop owner
6. Candy store owner

- A. Mrs. Crumb
- B. Mr. Bacon
- C. Mrs. Page
- D. Dr. Makeyouwell
- E. Mrs. Sweet
- F. Mr. Bowler

ANSWERS: 1-D; 2-A; 3-B; 4-C; 5-F; 6-E

Discussions about people and the jobs they do can conclude with a series of fill-in sentences such as these:

1. A doctor is someone who _____
2. A baker is someone who _____
3. A butcher is someone who _____
4. A librarian is someone who _____
5. A painter is someone who _____

Using the Thesaurus

If there are students in the class who need extension activities, the Mr. Men and Little Miss books can be used in conjunction with a thesaurus to expand vocabulary. Using a thesaurus in dictionary format, students can be asked to find as many words as possible that are synonymous with adjectives selected from each book.

In the book *Little Miss Scatterbrain*, the author uses the words "scatterbrain" and "forgetful" synonymously. Students should be asked to discover other words that mean the same thing. If some students have success using a thesaurus to find synonyms, they may then search for antonyms as well.

Overworked Words

The Mr. Men and Little Miss books provide an opportunity for students to expand and enrich their vocabularies. One of the most common overworked words is "said." As students read the collection, they can keep a chart of the various words the characters use instead of "said." After they have completed their chart, students should be encouraged to use the thesaurus to find other substitutes for "said." They can decide which characters might use these new words.

Sample: other words for "said"

asked --- Little Miss Curious

shouted --- Mr. Noisy

joked --- Mr. Funny

giggled --- Little Miss Giggles

Creative Writing

Story Specific Projects

Although the other activities in this guide can be used with any of the titles, here are some ideas that are specific to each of the books:

Mr. Bump - Come up with a list of safety tips to help Mr. Bump avoid having so many accidents.

Little Miss Busy - Write a story about the further adventures of Little Miss Busy.

Mr. Chatterbox - Write a monologue in which Mr. Chatterbox continues talking to himself.

Little Miss Somersault - Create a cartoon about Little Miss Somersault visiting your classroom.

Mr. Funny - Tell a funny story with a great punchline.

Little Miss Curious - Make a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

Story Theater

After reading one of the Mr. Men and Little Miss books, students can adapt it for story theater format. In this activity the story is rewritten as a play. Children become familiar with the way a play is written and how story dialogue can be changed to play script.

Story theater is easier to perform than a play because students read their parts, either seated before the class or standing in front of music stands that hold the script. Although there is no action, hand gestures and props are used. Funny hats or paper masks can identify the characters. Name tags and simple scenery can also be created.

Similes

To make their writing more creative and their reading more enjoyable, students should be encouraged to look for interesting comparisons. Those comparisons that contain the words "like" or "as" are similes. Many appear in the *Mr. Men* and *Little Miss* books.

When students understand the purpose of similes in writing, they should look for them in their reading. After they have found the similes in the collection, they can write their own for each of the characters.

Sample: The giant in the *Mr. Greedy* book has: a floor as big as a field, a table as big as a house, and chairs as high as trees.

Elicit original similes from students:

Plates as round as _____

Drinking cups as deep as _____

Collaborative Poem

Use the titles of the Mr. Men and Little Miss books and the characteristics described to write a classroom collaborative poem. Begin with a simple phrase such as...

As happy as _____

As funny as _____

Have individual class members choose an ending to each phrase. Encourage the use of colorful language. All of the contributions can be combined to form a single poem.

Sample Poem:

As quiet as feathers
falling on the grass,
As quiet as the morning
before anyone awakens,
As quiet as....

Create a Book

After reading one of the Mr. Men and Little Miss books together in class, have the students contribute to a joint project creating a sequel to the episode read. For example, use Mr. Bump as the protagonist, and have each student place him in another difficult situation resulting from his lack of coordination. The students' words can either be written or dictated and compiled into a book.

After reading several of the Mr. Men and Little Miss books, students can choose one of the characters in a book they have not yet read. They each can write a short book describing the escapades of this new character. Afterward, their original versions can be compared to the published book.

Letter Writing

Use the Mr. Men and Little Miss books to offer your students letter-writing practice. Suppose each member of the class chooses one of the characters to invite to his or her home for a visit. Contained in the letter would be some suggestions for appropriate behavior. Here is a list of steps for a letter-writing activity:

Choose a character:

1. List some things your character might do that are not permitted in your house
2. List some things that the character might do that are acceptable.
3. Write a friendly letter to your character including these suggestions.

Just for Fun

Creative Dramatics

The Mr. Men and Little Miss books provide an excellent touchstone for creative dramatics. After reading most of the collection, have the students imagine that some of the characters are going on a trip together.

Each student can select a character that he or she wants to be. Decisions must be made concerning his or her destination, what will happen along the way, and what will happen once he or she arrives.

The group can then perform an impromptu play. Name tags or simple props can be used to identify the characters during the performance. The only rule to follow is that the characters must remain true to their personalities.

Puppetry

The Mr. Men and Little Miss books are an excellent vehicle for a class project in puppetry. Students can create puppets to represent the characters in the books and write their own scripts for dramatization. The various Mr. Men and Little Misses can be made from socks or paper bags to be used as hand puppets. With the aid of an art instructor, more sophisticated marionettes can be made to resemble the characters.

Making a puppet stage:

A puppet stage can be as simple as large corrugated box, or as elaborate as a wooden construction that resembles a real stage. Have the class decorate the stage together, using poster paints, construction paper, etc. You may want to help your students make a curtain too. Illustrations in the book can serve as a model for backdrops that the children can paint themselves.

How to make a popsickle stick puppet:

1. Draw your favorite Mr. Men or Little Miss character onto heavy construction paper or poster board.
2. Color your character in with crayons or markers and then carefully cut the character out using scissors.
3. Glue a popsickle stick to the back of your character.
4. Use colored yarn, buttons, felt, etc. to decorate your puppet.

Other Ideas

Here is a list of other activities that you might like to try with the Mr. Men and Little Miss books:

1. Put yourself in Mr./Miss _____ 's shoes. Have each class member assume the characteristics of one of the characters for an entire morning.
2. Have a contest. Class members each choose a character and tell what this character can do best. Students can vote for the Mr. Men and Little Miss of the Year.
3. Prepare tape recordings for a listening center. Students begin by reading a story to themselves. It is then read aloud several times until it can be read without mistakes. The tapes can be placed in a listening center where less able readers can listen to them and follow along with the story.

Find more teaching guides and tips at: <http://us.penguin.com/youngreaders>.