

Classroom Guide

The Red Ghost

written by Marion Dane Bauer and illustrated by Peter Ferguson
published by Random House Books for Young Readers (a Stepping Stone Book), 2008

A note to the teacher: This is a wonderful book for a transitional reader and many of the activities have been designed specifically for that age group.



About the book

The doll was irresistible. Dressed in red velvet and sitting perched among disregarded treasures at a neighbor's garage sale, she seemed to Jenna to be the perfect gift for her little sister. But when Jenna brought the doll home, strange things began to happen. The cat went crazy. Her sister refused to play with the doll. At night, strange noises came from Jenna's closet where the doll was stored. What was going on?

The Red Ghost is a companion book to *The Blue Ghost*, which was listed on the Texas Bluebonnet Award 2007-2008 Master List. As with many of Marion Dane Bauer's books, *The Red Ghost* can be read on many levels. It is full of rich imagery and has a plot that keeps the reader in suspense until the very end. Accessible to beginning readers, the storyline will also appeal to older readers and anyone who enjoys a good ghost story.

Characters in the Story

- ◆ Jenna, soon to be a 4th grader
- ◆ Quinn, Jenna's little sister who will soon be five
- ◆ Dallas, Jenna's best friend
- ◆ Miss Tate, the neighbor
- ◆ Rocco, the cat

About the Author

Marion Dane Bauer's writing for children covers a wide range of genres including fiction and nonfiction, picture books, chapter books, young adult novels, and writing guides. Her titles include the Newbery Honor book *On My Honor* as well as *Rain of Fire*, winner of the Jane Adams Peace Association Award. Bauer is on the faculty of the Vermont College Master of Fine Arts in Writing for Children and Young Adults program and in 1996 was awarded the Kerlan Award for the body of her work. www.mariondanebauer.com

About the Illustrator

Peter Ferguson is a multi-talented artist whose whimsical works appear in books such as the Sisters Grimm series, the Lucy Rose series, and *The Anybodies* and its sequels. Many examples of his work appear on his website www.uberpete.jitterjames.com

Working with *The Red Ghost*

Things to think about before you read the book

- ◆ Do you enjoy scary stories? How do they make you feel?
- ◆ Do you know someone who doesn't like scary stories? Do you know why they don't like them?
- ◆ Have you ever had a toy that belonged to someone else? A grandfather? A cousin? A friend?
- ◆ Have you ever read a mystery before? What makes a story a mystery?
- ◆ What does it mean when something is haunted? Do you think that's only in stories or is that real?

Things to think about after you read the book

- ◆ Have you woken up in the night and thought you heard a sound? Did you figure out a story about what might have made that sound?
- ◆ When did you realize that the doll was haunted?
- ◆ Did you understand right away what Quinn meant when she said the doll was "full"? Do you think the author wanted you to find out slowly?
- ◆ Why do you think Rocco and Quinn were the first ones to "hear" Hazel, the ghost trapped inside the doll?
- ◆ Why do you think Hazel's mother kept the doll after Hazel died?

Unfamiliar terms

Have the students predict what these words and phrases might mean, based on their context. Have them look up what the words mean after the story has been read.

- ◆ antique
- ◆ bottlebrush
- ◆ carrot-top
- ◆ fragile
- ◆ gauzy

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. **Being Scared.** Have students draw, write a song, or write a story about something that scares them.

Have a discussion about how we work through being scared. Jenna was scared by the doll, and so were Dallas, Quinn, and Rocco. Even Miss Tate was scared by the doll. How do we know that each of these characters felt scared? What did those characters do to move past being scared? How do we do this in our own lives?

2. **What Toys Mean to Us.** You might also have students write, draw, tell a story out loud, or sing a song they've composed about a toy that means a lot to them. Think about starting out this activity by singing "The Marvelous Toy." This website has the lyrics, an instrumental version so your class can sing along, and a video of Peter, Paul, and Mary singing the song.

<http://www.links2love.com/christmas-marvelous-toy.htm>

Alternately, here's a YouTube version of Peter, Paul, and Mary:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3YabDAZtXU>

3. **Storytelling.** If you sense that the students in your class won't be frightened, engage in a session of storytelling. Have them sit in a circle, with the lights out, passing a flashlight around to shine up into their faces as they tell a scary story.

You might have them tell the story of *The Red Ghost* as they best remember it, passing the flashlight to a new person to tell each new scene.

Talk about the differences between reading a story and telling it out loud. How do our memories for the story play into telling a written story aloud for others to hear? Do our voices change? Do we use our bodies differently? Does it make a difference if we're sitting in a circle rather than having one person standing in front of us or walking among us? How is storytelling different from watching a story on television?

Teacher References

How mysteries fit into Bloom's Taxonomy

- ◆ Knowledge: Students arrange characters and events in the mystery.
- ◆ Comprehension: Students classify events, describe characters, and explain precisely what has occurred.
- ◆ Application: Students apply existing knowledge to the mystery by illustrating, dramatizing, and writing their interpretations.
- ◆ Analysis: Students analyze, categorize, and differentiate characters and events.
- ◆ Synthesis: Students collect and organize facts to form hypotheses.

- ◆ Evaluation: Students appraise, argue, assess, and evaluate their opinions in the process of solving the mystery.

Examples of mysteries specifically for children

This site, posted by Dakota Meadows eighth grade classes, features two-minute mysteries written by the students every year since 1996.

<http://www.isd77.k12.mn.us/schools/dakota/mystery/contents.html>

On MysteryNet.com, you'll find children's mysteries, some written for children and others written by children. They periodically run a writing contest for children.

<http://kids.mysterynet.com/>

Here are online mysteries to solve with Rex, the Dino Detective, at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

<http://www.childrensmuseum.org/geomysteries/mysteries.html>

For a good guide to other children's mystery books (by age), with reviews written by students, look here:

<http://www.firstclues.com/>

Companion Books for the Classroom

ADDITIONAL BOOKS BY MARION DANE BAUER

The Blue Ghost, Marion Dane Bauer, Random House Books for Young Readers (A Stepping Stone Book for Young Readers), 2006

The Green Ghost, Marion Dane Bauer, Random House Books for Young Readers (A Stepping Stone Book for Young Readers), 2008

The Painted House, Marion Dane Bauer, Random House Books for Young Readers (A Stepping Stone Book for Young Readers), 2007

On My Honor, Marion Dane Bauer, Clarion Books, 1986

BOOKS FOR TRANSITIONAL READERS

Bookstore Ghost. Barbara Maitland, Puffin, 1998. Fun and funny, this mystery set in a bookstore plays with language. Early reader.

Cam Jansen and the First Day of School Mystery. David Adler, Puffin, 2003. A series of books with Cam (short for Camera) Jansen, who has a photographic memory, and enjoys solving mysteries.

Chocolate Fever, Robert Kimmel Smith, Gioia Fiammenghi, Puffin, 2006

Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang, Mordecai Richler, illustrated by Fritz Wegner, Tundra Books, 2003

My Father's Dragon, Ruth Stiles Gannett, illustrated by Ruth Chrisman Gannett, Yearling, 2005

Sideways Stories from Wayside School, Louis Sachar, illustrated by Julie Brincklow, HarperTeen, 2004

The Judy Moody Totally Awesome Collection: Books 1-6, Megan MacDonald, illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds, Candlewick, 2007

BOOKS ABOUT MYSTERIES AND HAUNTINGS

13 Scary Ghost Stories, Marianne Carus, illustrated by Youngsheng Xuan, Scholastic Paperbacks, 2002

Alfred Hitchcock's Haunted Houseful: Nine Cool Stories About Haunted Houses and Ghosts for Boys and Girls, Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1998

Bunnicula: A Rabbit-Tale of Mystery, Deborah Howe, James Howe, illustrated by Alan Daniel, Aladdin, 2006

The Kingfisher Treasury of Ghost Stories, Kenneth Ireland, Editors of Kingfisher, Kingfisher, 2005

BOOKS ABOUT DOLLS

Apple Doll, Elisa Kleven, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007

Babushka's Doll, Patricia Polacco, Aladdin, 1995

Doll People, Ann M Martin, Laura Godwin, illustrated by Brian Selznick, Hyperion Books, 2003.

Enchanted Dolls' House, Robyn Johnson, Handprint Books, 2006

Lonely Doll, Dare Wright, Houghton Mifflin, 1998

WRITING RESOURCES

About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers, Lisa Cleaveland and Katie Wood Ray, Heinemann, 2004

What's Your Story? A Young Person's Guide to Writing Fiction, Marion Dane Bauer, Clarion Books, 1992

Writer's Story: From Life To Fiction, Marion Dane Bauer, Clarion Books, 1995

Writing with Authors Kids Love Writing: Exercises by Authors of Children, K. Johnson, Prufrock Press, 1998

You Can Write a Story! A Story-Writing Recipe for Kids, Lisa Bullard, illustrated by Deborah Haley Melom, Two-Can Publishing, 2007