



## Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

K-2

Language Arts/Drama  
by Linda Gold

### Language Arts

#### Reading: Literature Standard 3

Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

#### Reading: Literature Standard 5

Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

#### Reading: Literature Standard 7

Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

#### Reading: Literature Standard 9

Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories

### Drama, Standard 2.T.CR.5:

Create character through physical movement, gesture, sound and/or speech and facial expression based on stories or through improvisation.

### Standard 2.T.P.1:

Identify the character, setting, and essential events (plot) in a story that make up the dramatic structure, and use choices to shape believable and sustainable drama/theatre work.

**Objective:** The students will experience the story of Sylvester using process drama techniques. They will learn about the beginning, middle and end of the story. They will look at the story from several different view points, gaining an understanding of how different characters experience the story in different ways.

### Materials:

A copy of Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig

Create 3 large silhouettes of Sylvester to attach to a wall in the room. Make three signs to place above the silhouettes. 1. What we know; 2. What we think we know; 3. What we want to know. (optional)

### Resources:

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig;

Teaching Literacy through Drama by Patrice Baldwin and Kate Fleming.

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## Lesson Outline

Warm-up: Knots. Put the children in groups of three and have them stand in a circle. All three players cross their arms and grab the hands of the children that are next to them. The next step is to have the students untangle their arms without breaking their hand holds. Hands can twist within the grip but they cannot separate. The desired result is to have each group standing in a circle, holding hands without anyone's arms being crossed.

Discussion: Ask the students if this game is possible to play with only two people. Bring a child up and play the game with just two people, demonstrating that it is much too easy when there are only two of you. Compare the need for three people with the need for three parts to a story. If you only have two parts to a story, it is incomplete.

Optional Variation: With 2nd grade students, you may choose to use larger groups and discuss the need for other story parts like character, setting and conflict.

Narration: Read the first page of *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*. Because the pictures in this book often give away the story before it is read, it is recommended that the pictures be shown after reading each set of pages. Show the picture and discuss the setting and the characters.

Discussion: In most books, the beginning of the book introduces us to the characters and the setting of the book. Where is the setting of this book? What is something you see in the picture that lets you know where the setting is? Can the setting change? Who is the main character in this book? (*Sylvester Duncan*)

Role on the Wall: Indicate the silhouettes of Sylvester that you have attached to the wall. Place one of the three signs above each silhouette while briefly discussing each sign and explaining that the class will be writing things we already know on one of the silhouettes, things we think we know on another one and things we want to know on the third one. Ask the three questions to the class, one at a time, writing their responses on the correct silhouette. If you like, you can divide the class into three groups, choosing one person from each group to be the writer for that group. Send each group to one of the silhouettes and have the writer from each group write responses from their group on the silhouette. Go around to each of the silhouettes, asking the entire class if what is written belongs on that silhouette or on a different one. Make any necessary changes. You can also ask for any additional ideas that the groups may have overlooked. (For younger students who do not read or write yet, simply have a class discussion on what we know, what we think we know and what we want to know.) You may choose to add to the silhouettes as you read through the story.

Guided Visualization: Have the children close their eyes while you read the next two pages. (Do not show the pictures.) Encourage them to visualize details of what they see, hear and smell. Stop after the line, "...as if rain had never existed." Encourage them to keep the picture they just created in their mind as they open their eyes. Tell them you are going to come around and touch some of them on the shoulder. If they are touched they are to say, "I can see..." or "I can hear..." or "I can smell..." and then describe what they see, hear or smell. Show the pictures.

Narration: We are now going to move into the middle of the book. The middle of the book begins when a problem is introduced and ends when the problem is solved. Read two more pages plus part of the next one, up to the line, "He was frightened." Ask the students, "Do we have a problem? What is the problem? I wonder how Sylvester will solve this problem."

**Improvisation:** Either put the students in pairs or have them choose a partner. In each partnership, one of the children will be the lion and the other one will be Sylvester. Have each group predict and act out what happens next in the story. If a student has read or heard this story before, ask them to please not spoil it for the rest of the class, but instead to let their partner decide what happens next. Let each pair act out their prediction for the rest of the class.

**Narration:** Read the rest of the page, the next page, and part of the next one, up to the line, "...and he was unable to pick it up."

**Still Image/Thought Tracking:** Have the students find a place in the room where they can become Sylvester in the form of a rock. Ask the students to think about how Sylvester might be feeling right now. Tell the students that when you tap them on the shoulder, they are to speak their thoughts out loud, as though they are Sylvester. Tap a few children on the shoulder, encouraging each one to say something that hasn't been said yet. Ask the children to return to their seats.

**Narration:** Read the rest of the page and the next seven pages, up to the line, "It didn't smell like Sylvester."

**Teacher in Role/Eye Witness:** The teacher will now take on the role of one of Sylvester's parents. The students will become the neighbors, friends, policemen and dogs. You may choose another child to be the other parent. The children will sit as audience members. As you come to each part of the story, choose a few children to play the roles, making sure that every child has the opportunity to play a part. While in character, ask the groups questions like, "When was the last time you saw Sylvester?" "What was he doing?" "Which way did he go?" "Have you seen any strangers in town?" Tell them that they must remain true to the story. No one saw what really happened. This gives the students the opportunity to see what is happening from someone else's point of view.

**Telephone Conversation/Eavesdropping:** Either put the students in pairs or have them choose a partner. The partners will sit back to back on the floor. They are friends of Sylvester, having a telephone conversation about what has happened to him. Before starting, have them think for a minute about how they would feel if one of their friends disappeared. Let them begin their conversations. After a couple of minutes, have the students freeze. Tell them that you will walk around the room. When you are next to them, they are to carry on their conversation for everyone to hear. When you move away from them, they are to freeze. When it is not their turn to talk, they are to listen to each other's conversations.

**Narration:** Read the next two pages, up to the line, "Life had no meaning for them any more."

**Discussion:** (out of role) Ask the students if they think that a parent can ever move on and forget about a child they have lost? Emphasize that parents love their children so much that they would always have an empty spot in their heart for that child.

**Narration:** Read the next six pages, up to the line, "Flowers showed their young faces."

**Discussion:** Discuss the changes in the seasons and how long Sylvester has been a rock.

**Narration:** Read the rest of the story.

Discussion: Ask the students how the problem was solved. Physically show them the length of the beginning, the middle and the end of the book. Ask them which part is the longest. Explain that the middle of the story is always the longest portion of the book.

Hot Seating/Teacher in role: Choose a child to be Sylvester. You will play one of Sylvester's parents. The rest of the students are television news reporters. Sylvester is holding a press conference to explain what happened. Each reporter is to think of three questions they would like to ask Sylvester. If you wish, you can have the students write the questions down. Explain to the students that they might not get to ask all of their questions. As the parent, you will call on the students to ask the questions.

Tableau/Performance Carousel: As a class, make a list of the important events of the story. Put the events in chronological order. Break the students up into groups and assign each group one of the events. Have each group create a tableau, or frozen image of their event and then a plan to act out the event. When all the groups are ready, have them sit in a circular formation, in chronological order. The first group forms their tableau and on an agreed upon signal, the tableau is brought to life. Freeze the tableau when they are done. Have the second group form their tableau. The first group sits down and the signal is given for the second group to bring their tableau to life. Continue around the circle until all groups have had a chance to perform. Ask the students which of the tableaus were part of the beginning, middle and end of the story.

Role on the Wall: Have the students return to the silhouettes on the wall and add to the statements now that they have heard the entire book. Make the additions in a different color of ink so that you can tell what new things have been added. Go over them and discuss whether or not they are on the right silhouette. Make any adjustments that are needed. Discuss some of things the students would like to know and what they think the answers may be.

Evaluation: Ask the students the following questions:

What was the main problem in the story?

How did the problem get solved?

How do you think Sylvester's parents felt when he was missing?

Have you or one of your siblings ever gotten lost? How did you feel?

What is something we can do to help us from getting lost?

### Other Curriculum Connections

Discuss the importance of families and communities as Sylvester's family and community search for him. (Social Studies **Standard 2** (Citizenship): Students will recognize their roles and responsibilities in the school and in the neighborhood.)