

Martha

Gennady Spirin
2005
New York: Philomel Books

HOPE

Russia
Realistic Fiction
Reading Time: 7 minutes

CONCEPTS

Hope
Love
Courage

SUMMARY

When young Ilya finds an injured crow, he is determined to rescue it, even after the veterinarian tells him the bird will never fly again. Together, Ilya and his family care for the crow they name "Martha" until she is ready to return to the wild. Gennady Spirin, draws upon memories of life in Moscow with detailed watercolor illustrations, as he tells this gentle story of hope, love, and courage.

OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to identify, define, and discuss hope, love, and courage as they apply to the story. The student will explore appropriate ways to care for birds and other pets.

Interdisciplinary Ideas

LANGUAGE ARTS

Create a class booklet titled "Hope for Martha." Together, list 8 to 10 main events in the story. In pairs, choose, write, and illustrate one of the events. Compile pages, add a cover, and take turns reading your booklet with a partner.

ART

Look at the two-page illustrations of people in the veterinarian's office. Create a class mural of yourselves with your pets or pets you would like to have. Draw, color, and cut out your pictures, and place the murals on a bulletin board titled "Hope and Love."

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. With a parent or school volunteer, research a child's life in Russia. (keyword: Russia kids culture) Report findings to the class.
2. In pairs, and with an older student, find out what you can do to help animals, pets, or birds. (keywords: SPCA kids, KIND news, or animal rescue rehab) Share information with the class.

SCIENCE

1. Make bird deflectors to prevent birds from flying into windows. (keyword: wildlife rescue bird deflector)
2. In pairs, research to find facts about crows. (keyword: Paw's kids crows) Together, list facts on a poster and display in the classroom.
3. Make nature journals. Staple sheets of paper together and title the first page, "My Nature Journal." As a class, go outside to look and listen, and record your observations in journals with words and drawings. Share your observations with the class. Repeat this activity for a few days or for a week.

After the Story

Martha

DISCUSSION

1. What does Ilya's mama, Raya, do to help Martha after they find her with a broken wing? Why is it important for an adult, not a child, to do these things?
2. How do you know that Ilya doesn't give up hope that Martha will get well? What actions do Ilya and his family take to make the hope come true?
3. Look carefully at the illustrations in the book. How does this family show love for one another? How do you show love for your family?
4. How does Martha become a member of the family? Do you, or someone you know have a pet who is a part of the family? Tell about it.
5. Why can't Ilya keep Martha? Tell why he feels happy and sad at the end of the story. How does Ilya show courage? Talk about times you have shown courage by letting go of something you love when you wanted to hold on. Explain why letting go is sometimes the best choice.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate Moscow, Russia on a world map. Connect a string from Moscow to your city or state.
2. Invite an expert/staff member from the Humane Society or local aviary to talk with the class about caring for birds and other pets.
3. How can we help others have hope when they might be discouraged? Together, make a list of things you can say to friends and family to help them be hopeful.
4. Together, make up a play about someone who holds onto hope even though other people say the situation is hopeless. Perform for another class.

EXTENSION

1. Complete Home Connection pages and take home to share with families.
2. Hold a family meeting to talk about what to do when you find an injured animal. With permission, share with the class.

JOURNAL

1. In *My Heartwood Journal*, write attributes you think both you and Ilya possess, such as hope and courage.
2. In your journal, write questions you would like to ask the speaker. (See Activity #2).

VOCABULARY

dedication
dacha
shawl

resisted
wicker
astounded

elegant
confidently
reception room