

Classroom Connections & Additional Activities

- To see if they could get their job done in one day, Mike Mulligan had to estimate how much dirt Mary Anne would have to move. Fill a container with sand, dried beans, or rice. Ask the children to guess how many scoops it will take to move the sand to another container. Test their estimates. (This works well outdoors.) **MATH** **SCI**
- Estimate how long it will take to move all the sand if only one child moves it. Then estimate how long it will take two children. If everyone helps? **MATH** **SCI**
- Boil water in a tea kettle or pot with a lid. Why does it make noise? What is steam? How does it power Mary Anne? Why is steam dangerous? **SCI**
- Look at the illustrations and identify the features that show the story is 60 years old. What building(s) corresponds to the town hall in your area? What happens there? Arrange a visit to a judge and courtroom if possible. Draw the town hall of Popperville. **SS** **ART**

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

Virginia Lee Burton
1939
Boston: Houghton Mifflin

JUSTICE
USA
Reading Time: 8 minutes

CONCEPTS

Justice
Honesty
Hope

SUMMARY

Townpeople find a fair solution when complications threaten the honoring of an agreement. Burton's simple crayon illustrations recall small town life in the 1950s.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to identify and discuss fairness or justice as it applies to this story. The student will recognize developing fair solutions as an appropriate response to interpersonal conflicts.

After the Story

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

DISCUSSION

1. Why did Mike Mulligan and Mary Anne go to Popperville? What is a town hall? Who uses it? For what?
2. Why is it good to have agreements? What agreement did Mike Mulligan reach with Henry B. Swap? Why do you think that Henry B. Swap "smiled in a rather mean way?"
3. Talk about why you think the agreement Mike and Henry made was fair or unfair. How did Mike Mulligan keep his side of the agreement? What was the problem after the cellar was finished? Why didn't Henry want to pay Mike? Was Henry's solution fair? Why or why not?
4. Was the little boy's solution fair? Why or why not?
5. What if you lost a library book? What would be a fair solution to the problem? Talk about a time when you helped think of a fair solution to a problem.

ACTIVITIES

1. Talk about classroom rules; why do we need them? Classroom rules can be like an agreement because we can all agree to follow them. Sometimes children forget to follow a rule. What are the consequences of breaking the rules? Discuss what makes them fair or unfair.
2. Invite a contractor or a lawyer to your class. Discuss the agreements that each must enter into, and how they stick to them. What if something happens that's not in the agreement?
3. Role play Mike Mulligan and Henry B. Swap talking after Mike finished digging the cellar. Have each character give their views about why Mike should/should not get paid. Have the rest of the class act as townspeople trying to solve the problem.
4. Brainstorm a list of problems that children have experienced with siblings or classmates. Pick one, and discuss three ways the conflict can be solved without hurting anyone. (Encourage all students to participate.)

EXTENSION

1. Ask your parents if they remember reading Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel when they were children. Tell them what you learned about fairness in the story.
2. At home make a list of household rules and discuss which ones are fair to everyone.

WRAP-UP

In My Heartwood Journal draw a picture of two people making an agreement.

VOCABULARY

Town Constable
Selectmen
furnace