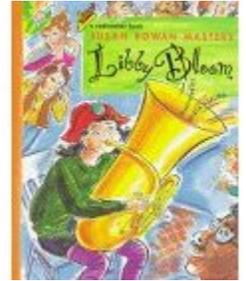


A Teaching Guide for *Libby Bloom*

by Susan Rowan Masters

susan@srmasters.com

www.srmasters.com



Libby Bloom is a humorous beginning chapter book for grades 3 - 5 that keeps the reader smiling, even through the serious parts. Among the thought provoking themes students will explore are family, friendship, activism and self-confidence. This guide offers a variety of interdisciplinary tie-ins.

Materials: [Libby Bloom by Susan Rowan Masters](#)

Plan:

Thematic Links

FRIENDSHIP -- Ask students to name the qualities they look for in a friend (i.e. similar interests, willingness to share, loyalty, a good listener, etc.) Afterward, have the students find examples of where Libby and Ralph's friendship have the same qualities they have listed. Discuss this statement: In order to have a friend, you must first be a friend.

FAMILY-- Ask students to describe Libby's relationship with her parents and sister. Does age difference affect the sisters' relationship? How is her family similar to yours? Different? How do her parents support Libby when she gets "cold feet" after Mrs. Whippo invites her to the school board meeting?

SELF-CONFIDENCE -- Have students discuss Libby's feelings as she compares herself with her talented older sister, Noel. Bring into the discussion the meaning of envy and lack of self-confidence. How does Libby eventually become more self-confident? Ask students what it says about a person who other people call, "having a big head." Help them to recognize that true self-confidence can only be gained through effort -- when you are willing to work hard toward a goal.

Interdisciplinary Links

MATH*-- The book begins with Libby singing off-key in the school chorus. Ask students what range of singing voices are in their chorus (i.e. soprano, alto). What does Libby sing? Lead them to conclude that since Libby struggles to sing the high part, she is probably an alto.

Ask students to count the number of high range voices and low range voices for both boys and girls in the school chorus. Have them graph the results. Younger students can construct a bar graph, while older students can construct a pie graph using percentages.

Prediction: Have students predict how voice range changes as they mature and find out what other singing voices -- besides soprano and alto -- are in their local high school chorus (tenor, bass). Make a graph, then compare the two graphs.

SOCIAL STUDIES -- Mr. Cheney, the band teacher, shares this advice: "The things in life that come hard, that really challenge us, we end up valuing the most. Like learning to play the tuba or working to make right what we believe is wrong." When he writes an editorial on budget cuts for the local paper, Libby is inspired to do something herself. She turns her interest in cartoon drawing into her own political activism.

Ask students what famous and not so famous people they can name who have tried to ““make right what they believe is wrong,”” bringing into the discussion the term ““political activism”” (i.e. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Susan B. Anthony.) Can they name someone in their own community?

LANGUAGE ARTS -- Ask students to bring in the editorial pages of their local newspaper. Have them choose an article that they strongly agree/disagree with. Ask them to write their own editorial response. Or, if they prefer, have them write on another issue that they feel strongly about (i.e. protecting the environment, use of animal fur, school dress code.)

On page 4 after Libby burps, the boys “were rolling in their chairs, guffawing.” Explain that this is called figurative speech. Have students make up their own sentences describing a visual picture of an action that is not literal.

MUSIC* -- Libby takes music lessons from Mr. Cheney, the band instructor. Does their school offer individual lessons as well?

To introduce the various instruments (brass, percussion, woodwinds, etc.) invite the band instructor and/or band members to your classroom. Or make arrangements to take students on a field trip to a local high school during their band practice session.

Only after Libby learns to blow though the mouthpiece properly (purse her lips and buzz) can she begin to play the tuba. By having students try various instruments they can discover for themselves how difficult and perhaps rewarding playing an instrument can be.

SCIENCE* -- On page 17 “a deep rumble echoed off the pocked walls. It faded away leaving only the sound of knocking and rattling from the boiler room across the hall.” Have students make a sound (a handclap, hitting a drum, etc.) in different environments around the school (i.e. cafeteria, gym, outdoors, classroom, closet.) Talk about how sound waves travel.

Develop a musical scale: use bottles of the same size; fill each with various amounts of water to construct the scale.

ART -- Libby draws a political cartoon which she sends to the local newspaper. Have students draw their own political cartoons illustrating what they have said or say on a new issue.

Ask how a political cartoon might be more powerful than an article on a similar subject (i.e., a drawing is visual with an immediate impact on the onlooker, whereas an article must be read to the end.) What might be a drawback (i.e., information is limited.)

Libby draws a cartoon character she calls Stretch McKinsy. Have students create their own character and produce a short comic strip (option: use computer software utilizing clip art.)

COMPUTER -- Have students research their social studies/language arts projects at home/school through the Internet.

Closure

Tell students that, like Libby, big things get done by people making a difference in a variety of small ways. Leave students with this thoughtful question: Where can they make a difference?

Comments:

*Suggestions submitted by Joan Masters, certified teacher in N-6 Elementary and Special Education.