

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

by William Steig

Caldecott Medal Winner (1970). Emotions and feelings run high and low in this beloved picture book of Sylvester and his magic pebble.



Read

Before:

Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow that with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, *If you found a magic pebble and could make a wish, what would you wish for?* Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an "I wonder" statement based on the cover illustration.

- I wonder if these animals are worried?

During:

Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions, and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out "rare words" (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in every day conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

Rare Words in *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*

- hobbies: something you enjoy doing for fun
- pebbles: small round stones
- unusual: out of the ordinary
- extraordinary: very unusual and deserving attention because of being wonderful, excellent, or shocking
- flaming: brightly glowing
- remarkable: worth noticing or commenting on
- gradually: changing slowly
- ceased: to come to an end
- vanished: to disappear suddenly
- existed: to be a real thing
- gratified: to satisfy a desire
- wart: a small lump on the skin
- fetlock: the part of the lower leg of a horse or donkey
- eager: enthusiastic and excited about something
- amaze: to fill somebody with wonder
- startled: to frighten a person or animal into making an involuntary movement
- panicked: a sudden feeling of fear or anxiety, usually overwhelming and uncontrollable
- perplexed: to puzzle or confuse somebody
- bewildered: to puzzle or confuse somebody
- frantic: in a state in which it is impossible to keep feelings or behavior under control
- soothe: to ease pain
- longed: to want something very much
- scold: to tell somebody off angrily
- dawn: the first appearance of light at the beginning of a new day
- inquiring: appearing to want to know or learn something
- nook: a small corner
- gully: a channel or small valley
- dreadful: extremely unpleasant
- budded: a flower that has not yet opened
- insisted: to state something firmly in spite of disagreement from others
- aimlessly: without purpose or direction
- alfalfa: a plant of the pea family
- sassafras: a tree with aromatic bark, lobed leaves, and small bluish fruits
- timothy compote: a perennial grass
- mysterious: about which little is known, but which excites considerable curiosity
- sorrow: a feeling of deep sadness caused by a loss
- embraces: to hug somebody
- fond: feeling love, affection, or preference for somebody
- exclamations: a word or phrase that is shouted out suddenly

After:

Discuss the story. Ask questions...

- One of Sylvester's hobbies was collecting pebbles. What are some of your hobbies?
- What are some things that can be collected?
- What happened to Sylvester when he wished for the rain to stop?
- When Sylvester headed home with his magic pebble, how did he feel?
- Do you think Sylvester's wish to be a rock was a good wish? Why or why not?
- How did the lion feel when the donkey he saw turned into a rock?
- Is there anything else Mr. and Mrs. Duncan can do to find Sylvester? Give an example.
- Do any of you have an object that you feel is magic or lucky? What is it?
- Why do you think it was a good idea to put the pebble in an iron safe?



Do

Make a Rock Paperweight

Break out the art supplies and paint a picture on a smooth, fist-sized rock. Acrylics offer the brightest colors. Permanent markers allow for detail. Have some fun and glue on wiggly eyes, sequins, feathers, or pompoms. Give these paperweights as gifts.

Source: www.suite101.com