FANGS AND ME: Teachers' Guide

This is a First Flight Chapter book with ten short chapters and some black and white illustrations. A total of fifty-four pages, (approximately 6500 words) this book is suitable for the reader who is looking for something more challenging than a picture book length and format. Depending on the reading abilities of the student, this is suitable for Grades 2-4.

SUMMARY:

Maisie's best friend, who lived next door to her, moves away. A shy girl, Maisie doesn't know if she will ever have any friends other than the spider she loves, whom she names Fangs. When the family next door moves in, Maisie is targeted by their son, Buddy, who goes out of his way to bully her. Maisie manages to overcome her timidity with the help of Fangs and confronts Buddy, thereby gaining his grudging respect. To her surprise, she also gains some understanding of him as a human being.

GENERAL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS:

1) **Bullying**

* the impact on the child being bullied
* the possible causes of bullying

2) Conflict resolution

* constructive and respectful ways of dealing with conflict
* ways that may not work

3) Loneliness and shyness

* overcoming shyness to reach out to others.
* gaining self confidence to approach others to make new friends

4) Spiders

* love of spiders
* fear of spiders and possible causes
* common spiders and their characteristics

5) Courage

* Different kinds of courage, such as physical courage; mental courage to overcome fears, to face a bully, or even a spider!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1) Topics of discussion

* Why is Maisie so sad when her friend moves away? Have you ever felt as she does? Are you ever afraid to make friends? Do you think that maybe others might feel the same at times?
* What does Maisie feel after she meets Buddy for the first time? Have you ever been bullied? What did it feel like? What can you do about it?
* Discuss some positive ways to deal with bullies. Also discuss methods that don't seem to work. (If there is a school code of conduct or policy re: behaviour and bullying this is a good place to review those.)
* Discuss what Maisie sees and hears about Buddy that may shed light on why he is so angry. Have you ever felt so hurt and angry that you wanted to hurt someone else? What would be a better way of dealing with your feelings than lashing out at someone else?
* How does Maisie feel about spiders? How do you feel about spiders? Why?
* How did Maisie find the courage to stand up to Buddy? Discuss how she discovered she might have the upper hand, because of Buddy's fear of spiders. Why did she decide not to push that further? Do you agree with her decision? Do you think that it was okay for Buddy to bully Maisie because he felt bad about moving?
* Discuss the concept of respect. Did Buddy respect Maisie? When did he learn to respect her? Why? Did Maisie respect Buddy? And Fangs? Did Maisie's father respect her?

2) Writing exercises

* Write a journal account as though you were Buddy describing your first meeting with Maisie.
* Write a letter Maisie might write to Veena describing the events in this story
* Write a journal entry as written by Maisie the day she invites Kelly over, describing what they did.
* Make a list of the feelings Maisie goes through in this story, and then a similar list for Buddy.
* Write an account of an incident when you were bullied or when you saw someone being bullied. Describe your feelings and the feelings of the people involved. If you could resolve the situation differently, how would you do it?
* Describe what you feel when you see someone being bullied, or when you have bullied someone else. Make a list of what you felt – remember, you can feel more than one thing at a time.
* Describe a made up pet that you would like to have, and the fun you might have with that pet.
* Make up a pet that has magical qualities. Describe the pet, and describe its magical qualities.

3) Art Activities

* Draw or paint a picture of a real spider, with as many details as possible.
* Draw a picture of an imaginary spider, with imaginary features you think would be interesting.
* With string, make an orb web.
* Do a diorama of an imaginary animal of your choosing, in its habitat.
* Draw a picture of Maisie and Kelly playing.
* Make a 3-D model of a spider (with Styrofoam balls and sticks, or papier maché or any other medium).
* In groups, make a web with string, and a model of a spider.

4) Drama

* Act out the part in the book where Buddy and Maisie meet, adding further dialogue between the characters.
* Plan and act out an encounter with a bully that has a happy outcome. How can bystanders change and effect what happens, both in a positive way and in a negative way?

5) Extra Study and Research activities

* Research diadem spiders and do a report, including drawings.
* Research the physical structure of a spider, and do a drawing naming the parts of the body.
* Research different types of spider webs and name a few spiders that make each type. Include illustrations.
* Research the habits and lifespan of a diadem spider, including habitat, diet, defence and predators.
* List at least five types of common spiders in your area.
* Write a report on how to study and handle a live spider in a way that is safe to you, and most of all, in a way that does not hurt or harm the spider.
* Report the differences between spiders and insects.
* Research how a spider lays eggs and how the young hatch, develop and survive.
* Look in the library for other books of fiction that feature spiders(Eg: Charlotte's Web) and write a book report.

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