WHEN-I-WAS-A-LITTLE-GIRL: Teachers' Guide

SUMMARY:

Lisabeth's mother constantly tells her about the perfect child she herself used to be. But one awful day, when there is liver and onions for dinner, and no dessert, When-I-was-a-little-girl actually appears. She's all neat and tidy with an I'm-so- perfect smile. Not only that, but she loves liver and onions, and she doesn't get a single spot on her clothes. How will Lisabeth manage to get rid of this obnoxious visitor? A humorous story about inter-generational relationships, and parental expectations and memories.

GENERAL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS:

1) Family relationships

∗ relationship of children with parents
∗ relationship of children with grandparents

2) Parental expectations of children's behaviour

3) Parents memories of themselves as children

∗ family myths
∗ exaggerations/distortions of parent's memory of an older time/experience

4) Food and Nutrition

∗ what parents expect children to eat
∗ what children like to eat
∗ favourite foods
∗ can't-stand foods
∗ nutrition, healthy eating — study of Canada's Food Guide

5) Messiness

6) Memories

∗ the reliability of memories
∗ how people remember events differently

7) Exaggeration

∗ meaning of the word
∗ motives behind exaggeration — humour, forgetfulness, deliberate for various purposes.

8) Generational Differences

* differences in daily life between parents' and children's generations
* differences in daily life between grandparents' and children's generations
* similarities in human nature between generations

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1) Topics of discussion

* How do you think Lisabeth feels when she is served liver and onions for dinner? Would you like this kind of meal? What kind of food do you like to eat and why? What are your favourite and least favourite things to eat?
* Who is When-I-was-a-little-girl?
* What kind of smile does When-I-was-a-little-girl have? What do you think this means? Do you like people with this kind of smile?
* What does Lisabeth feel when When-I-was-a-little-girl eats up the liver and onions and doesn't even get a single spot on her clothes?
* Why does Lisabeth decide to call Grandma? Why does she ask Grandma to come over?
* Why does When-I-was-a-little-girl turn pale when Grandma shows up?
* Why does Grandma agree to come over to Lisabeth's house? What do you think she feels about When-I-was-a-little-girl?
* What do you think Lisabeth's mother feels when Grandma remembers things differently from When-I-was-a-little-girl?
* Why does Lisabeth not want to clean up her toys right away? What does When-I-was-a-little-girl want to do? Is this realistic? Do you like to clean up your room?
* What makes When-I-was-a-little-girl finally disappear?
* How does Lisabeth celebrate when When-I-was-a-little-girl leaves? How do you best like to celebrate?
* What do you think Lisabeth and her mother might do together to have fun?
* Is When-I-was-a-little-girl's behaviour believable? Why do you think Grandma remembers When-I-was-a-little-girl's behaviour differently?
* Look carefully at the illustrations in the book. Who is shown in the pictures that is not mentioned in the story? (The baby and the dog.)
* Discuss memories, and how people remember things differently. Why do you think this happens?
* What does the word 'exaggerate' mean? How does this apply in this story?
* What are the reasons people exaggerate? Have you ever exaggerated? How and when?

- Discuss favourite foods and least favourite foods. Discuss the Canada Food Guide and what makes a balanced meal.
- Discuss the food Lisabeth's mother gives her. Does it meet Canada's Food Guide? What else could be served that would be more to Lisabeth's liking, and yet also healthy and nutritious.

2) Writing exercises

- List five or more words that describe Lisabeth, and five or more words that describe When-I-was-a-little-girl.
- What are the foods that Lisabeth is served that she cannot bear to eat, at dinner and at lunch the next day?
- Write a list of your favourite foods and another list of your least favourite foods.
- Describe what would be a perfect meal to you. Write at least three sentences describing it.
- Write a list of five or more words that describe your room.
- Write a list of favourite things you love to do with one or both of your parents.
- Write an imaginary account of a perfect day that you could spend with your Mom or Dad and what you would most like to do. Anything at all.
- Describe what it would be like to "play pig".
- Find a picture of your Mom or Dad as a child and describe it in words.
- Write a story entitled: Switching Places. Imagine you are the parent for a day, and your Mom and Dad the children. What would you do? What kind of day would you have? How would it be different from an ordinary day?
- Write an account of something fun that Lisabeth and her Mom do the next day, other than "play pig".
- Write an account of any family story that you have heard an older person in your family tell.
- If you were a perfect child, write an exaggerated account of the wonderful things you'd do. Anything is possible, so you can be magical, too, if you wish.
- Make a list of words that describe you as you are, and another list of exaggerations about you.
- Imagine that you met your mom or dad when they were little. Write an account of what you might do together.
- Write a story entitled: When-I-am-all-grown-up. Pretend that you are all grown up and describe what you would be like. What are the things you'd never let your kids do? Always let your kids do?
- Same and Different: Write an account of how you are the same as one of your parents when he/she was little, and how you are different. Include physical characteristics as well as likes, dislikes, and behaviour.

3) Art Projects

- Make a feelings chart: draw faces with expressions to show how Lisabeth feels at the start of the story; when When-I-was-a-little-girl shows up; when Lisabeth's mother says When-I-was-a-little-girl is staying "for a while"; when Grandma shows up; when When-I-was-a-little-girl leaves, and at the end of the story. Draw a chart showing When-I-was-a-little-girl's feelings at different parts of the story. Remember, you can feel more than one thing at a time.
- Find pictures of your family members and make a family tree.
- Draw pictures of your mom or dad when they were little, doing something fun.
- Draw a picture of you and your mom or dad doing something fun together.
- Draw a picture of you when you are all grown up.

4) Drama

- Act out a new scene, not shown in the book, between Lisabeth and When-I-was-a-little-girl. For eg: watching TV, getting ready for bed, brushing teeth, asking for a bed-time story, turning off the lights.

5. Extra Study and Research activities

- Interview your parents about what they best liked to do for fun in their spare time, when they were children. Make a list of their favourite activities. How are these activities the same or different from what you like to do in your spare time?
- Interview a grandparent and find out about the kinds of activities he/she best liked to do for fun in his/her spare time, when he/she was a child. Make a list of his/her favourite activities. How are these activities the same or different from what you like to do in your spare time? Would you like to be a child back then?
- Class assignment: Talk to your parents and grandparents about their favourite activities when they were children. Have a class discussion about how times have changed in terms of what children do to play. How is play different now? What is the role of TV? Computers? How was day to day life different back then to the way it is now? Do you think kids had more fun? Less fun?
- Interview a parent or grandparent about something very naughty they did as a child. Write about it.
- Group Activity. Project. Make a poster entitled: *Play, Then and Now*. List and describe some of the activities children enjoy now, and the kinds of recreational activities enjoyed by your parents or grandparents when they were children. Include pictures, either photographs or drawings, to illustrate. Do a class presentation.
- Group Activity. Project. Make a poster entitled: School, Then and Now. Describe, including pictures or drawings, how schools were different in your grandparent's time compared with today. Include information on subjects, playgrounds, recess, discipline, teachers.

* Group Activity. Project. Imagine what life might be like in the future, for your grandchildren. Make a presentation of how your grandchildren would go to school, how it would be different, what kinds of technologies there might be, etc.
* Class Activity: Make a poster, or a series of posters with pictures or drawings of every child's favourite foods and also least favourite foods.
* Research Canada's Food Guide and do a presentation or report on what makes a balanced meal.

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