MARTHA SPEAKS

Author: Susan Meddaugh
Publisher: Houghton Mifflin

THEME:
Dogs are terrific companions with unique characteristics and talents.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:
Problems arise when Martha, the family dog, learns to speak after eating alphabet soup.
Luke, LeVar’s favorite pooch, steps to the forefront and takes over the show. As a result, viewers get a dog’s eye view of life, and they see clips of old time dog heroes and dogs doing tricks. Then they meet an animal trainer who demonstrates how he trains dogs for TV and movie performances.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:
Brainstorm a variety of ways in which animals communicate with people, such as wagging, barking in different “voices,” purring, scratching, etc.
Explore the “What if...” notion that if animals could talk, what might they tell us? Use different groups of animals for this discussion, e.g., farm animals, zoo animals, rain forest animals, desert animals, and others. Students would also likely want to imagine that their own pets could talk.
Discuss the concept of “point of view.” In the program, we see the world from Luke’s point of view. Contrast this way of telling a story with the book Martha Speaks, which has a narrator who tells Martha’s story.
Discuss “fantasy” as a type of literature. What aspects of Martha Speaks make the book a fantasy?

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:
Read the sequels, Martha Calling and Martha Blah Blah. Discuss the nature of a sequel and how it continues a story or creates further adventures for a character. Have the children think of additional problems that Martha might encounter and write their own sequels.
Have the students write and then role play a segment for the evening news in which Martha is interviewed about thwarting the burglar.
Use alphabet pasta as a manipulative to make words.
Have the students write a personal telephone directory for Martha including places that she would likely call. They might use an actual telephone directory to give them ideas.

Make Martha puppets, using lunch bags and construction paper or paper plates. Have students write a short biography of Martha and then introduce her to the class using their puppet.
Do some creative brainstorming in response to: What would Martha eat in order to be able to do math, or a science experiment, or create a work of art? Choose one of the generated ideas and write and illustrate a class book.
Brainstorm a list of “rewards” of pet ownership. Use the list as a stimulus for interested students to research ways in which pets help their owners. Balance this list with one that outlines the responsibilities of owning a pet.
Have the students create animal conversations. They can cut out pictures of animals from magazines, glue them to paper, and write the conversations in word balloons.
Start a “Dogs in the News” bulletin board with the class. Have students collect newspaper and magazine articles and pictures about dogs. Analyze the display with the students: Do they notice any common themes among the articles? Do any of the articles make them feel happy, sad, angry? Did any of the articles give them new information? Do any of the articles make them want to take an action? In addition to further developing the study of dogs, this activity helps children understand the different purposes of newspaper articles.

Have students research the many roles that dogs have in societies around the world, for example, as workers (seeing-eye dogs, police dogs, companions for disabled individuals, rescuers, sheep herders, etc.) and as entertainers. Include in the research, the types of training that are needed for these roles.
Do a “Draw-a-Dog” activity that requires students to follow simple directions. Prepare a set of attribute envelopes, such as “type of hair,” “color,” “ears,” “tail,” and “size.” In each of the envelopes, place cards with descriptive words related to that attribute. Students take one card from each envelope and draw the dog described by the cards. For example, a child might draw an “enormous, black and white shaggy dog with pointed ears and a long fluffy tail.” Display all pictures.

Make alphabet soup. As they eat, encourage students to think of “wonderful words” (these might be favorite words or unusual words or even long words) and jot these on a large soup bowl chart.

RELATED THEMES:
pets
animal training
pet ownership

READING RAINBOW TEACHER’S GUIDE
Program #112 — Martha Speaks
RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:
Program #43 — Best Friends
Program #72 — The Adventures Of Taxi Dog

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Susan Meddaugh (pronounced “Med-aw”) worked as a designer and art director in the children’s book department of Houghton Mifflin before devoting herself to full-time writing and illustrating. She began telling herself stories through words and pictures as a child and still enjoys the process of creating a book, from the idea to the finished art. Susan lives in Massachusetts with her husband and son and her own dogs, Martha and Skits.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:
MY PUPPY IS BORN
by Joanna Cole, photographs by Margaret Miller (William Morrow)

EARTH HOUNDS, AS EXPLAINED BY PROFESSOR XARGLE
by Jeanne Willis, illus. by Tony Ross (Dial)

THE NIGHT I FOLLOWED THE DOG
by Nina Laden (Chronicle Books)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:
THE FIVE-DOG NIGHT
by Eileen Christelow (Clarion)

GOOD DOG, CARL
by Alexandra Day (Green Tiger Press)

GINGER JUMPS
by Lisa Campbell Ernst (Bradbury)

PLUNK’S DREAMS
by Helen V. Griffith, illus. by Susan Condie Lamb (Greenwillow)

I AM THE DOG. I AM THE CAT
by Donald Hall, illus. by Barry Moser (Dial)

SECOND-GRADE DOG
by Laurie Lawlor, illus. by Gloria Fiammenghi (Whitman)

MARTHA CALLING
by Susan Meddaugh (Houghton Mifflin)

MARTHA BLAH BLAH
by Susan Meddaugh (Houghton Mifflin)

THREE STORIES TO READ TO YOUR DOG
by Sara Swan Miller, illus. by True Kelley (Houghton Mifflin)

CAN I BE GOOD?
by Livingston Taylor, illus. by Ted Rand (Gulliver/Harcourt Brace)

RIPTIDE
by Frances Ward Weller, illus. by Robert J. Blake (Philomel)
Martha Speaks. 25K likes. Martha's a talking dog who loves to learn new words! http://pbskids.org/martha/ @pbsmarthaspeaks. Martha's never afraid to belt out a tune or two...or three! Share something you're proud of using the hashtag #BelieveInYourself and check out Martha Speaks, Arthur, Design Squad, High School Quiz Show, PLUM LANDING, and Peep and the Big Wide World on the WGBH Kids Vine Channel! vine.co. Martha's never afraid to chase after her dreams. Always #BelieveInYourself and for more visit Martha Speaks Wiki The wiki about PBS Kids' original series, Martha Speaks that anyone can edit. 158 articles since September 19, 2008. It's about a talking dog named Martha. After eating alphabet soup Martha the dog can talk! In this series Martha discovers all kinds of new words... Welcome to Martha Speaks Wiki. The wiki about PBS Kids' original series, Martha Speaks that anyone can edit. 158 articles since September 19, 2008. Contents. [show]. News. Martha Speaks. 25K likes. Martha's a talking dog who loves to learn new words! http://pbskids.org/martha/ @pbsmarthaspeaks. Jon Hamm talks about his appearance on Martha Speaks as Ham Johnson. He says Cora "totally dug it!" What does your dog think?