

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great

by
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Book Information

Judy Blume, Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great
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A new friend shows Sheila that you have to admit your fears before you can overcome them.

Topics: Behavior, Lying; Emotions, Fear; English in a Flash Recommended List, Library 3, Chapter 6, 90%; Family Life, Vacations; Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Read Now with Power Up Recommended Lists, Choose a Challenge: Decisions; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 1-3

Main Characters

Betsy Ellis Mouse's little sister

Bobby Egran the boy whose room Sheila stays in for the summer

Jane and Sondra Van Arden twin friends of Mouse who become Sheila's friends for the summer

Libby Tubman Sheila's older sister

Mouse Ellis a girl with whom Sheila becomes friends while spending the summer in Tarrytown, NY

Sheila Tubman a ten-year-old girl who has a hard time admitting that she is afraid of many things

Vocabulary

mimeograph machine a machine that makes paper copies using a special blue ink

scenery the background in a play

Testor's glue a special glue used in model building

Synopsis

Sheila Tubman's family spends the summer in the

Egrans' home in Tarrytown, New York. This is a treat because the Tubmans live in a little apartment, and they will be able to enjoy a whole house for the summer. The summer seems as if it's going to be fantastic until the Tubmans arrive in Tarrytown, and Sheila finds out that the Egrans have a dog, and she must sleep in a boy's room. Then, her mother insists Sheila learn how to swim over the summer vacation.

Since her parents won't be convinced to go back home, Sheila makes the best of her situation. On the second day, she makes friends with Mouse Ellis, a girl her age, who is the Junior Champion yo-yoer of Tarrytown. Sheila and Mouse become friends even though Mouse catches Sheila lying to her about being able to swim.

Eventually Sheila meets Mouse's friends, and they all play together. Sheila and Mouse spend most of their days in the pottery class at summer camp until Sheila decides she will create a camp newspaper and show her new friends that she is good at something. As Sheila tries to do the whole paper by herself, she misses her pottery classes, and the paper doesn't turn out very well. She concludes she should have had assistants do most of the work, and she passes the paper off to some other campers as a prize. Her swim instructor patiently works with Sheila and succeeds in getting her to admit that she is afraid of the water. Once she makes this admission, her lessons go much better and she actually passes her swim test at the end of the summer.

As the summer goes by, Sheila realizes she isn't as good at hiding her fears as she thought and eventually begins to overcome some of them by admitting that they exist. By the end of the summer, she even considers keeping one of the puppies from the Egrans' dog.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

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Initial Understanding

Sheila and Libby got along about as well as most sisters do. Give examples of some typical sibling interactions that occurred between them.

Libby called Sheila a spoiled brat. Libby tattled on Sheila. Sheila tried to pull a prank on Libby. Sheila said she wanted her room to be as far away from Libby's as possible.

Literary Analysis

What were some of the many things of which Sheila was afraid?

Sheila's fears included dogs, thunderstorms, spiders, and putting her face underwater.

Inferential Comprehension

Why was Sheila's edition of the newspaper less successful than the editions made later?

Sheila tried to do everything by herself. She refused to let anyone help her, and the work was too much for one person.

Constructing Meaning

During the play that Libby's sister was in, one of the actresses froze, unable to say her lines, and Sheila said them for her. Have you ever had an experience like this? What would you have done if you were Sheila?

Answers will vary.

Teachable Skills

Comparing and Contrasting Sheila was excited to stay in Tarrytown at the Egrans' because she would get her own room. Her home in New York City is actually an apartment with only five rooms, and she is excited about the difference in the Egrans' house. The size of their home is not the only difference between the Tubmans' and the Egrans' homes. The Tubmans' is in a large city; the Egrans' is in a smaller community. In small groups, encourage the students to list the differences Sheila might have noticed between the two cities.

Recognizing Plot All stories have a central conflict or problem. In this story the main character, Sheila, has a hard time admitting her fears and her faults. She is hampered in her swimming lessons because she won't admit her fear of putting her face in the water. Have students think of other characters they have read about and list the fears or difficulties they had to overcome.

Responding to Literature Libby called Sheila a spoiled brat when Mr. and Mrs. Tubman wouldn't let the dog come into the house because Sheila didn't want to be near her. Libby felt Sheila was always getting her way. Have students discuss Libby's feelings about Sheila. Did Sheila always get her way? Have the students ever felt similarly about a sibling or classmate? What did they do about it? What should their parents have done about the dog?

Recognizing Details One of the things that Mouse could do that Sheila could not was yo-yo. In fact, Mouse was the Junior Champion of Tarrytown. Yo-yo's are very popular in parts of the country. Have someone demonstrate and teach some of the yo-yo tricks mentioned in the story. Hold a yo-yo contest in the class.