

Activities for *Those Shoes*

Keep 'em Reading • by | Judy Bradbury

Grades
K-2, 3-5

THOSE SHOES

By Maribeth Boelts, illustrated by Noah Z. Jones
(Candlewick, 2007)

In-Depth Read-Aloud Plan

For a creative, attention-getting prop for the read-aloud of *Those Shoes*, find an old item that was once in fashion and very trendy but is now hopelessly outdated. (How about a blazer with huge shoulder pads?)

Preparation for Read-Aloud:

Show listeners the fad item you've dug up or a photograph of one from bygone days. Note the photograph on Boelts's website of the pair of sneakers she wanted as a youngster that spurred the creation of this story (www.maribethboelts.com/news.html). Following the "Before Reading" segment of this plan, tell listeners about the fad item you brought in.

Before Reading:

- Ask children to name things they *need*. List these in one column. In a parallel column, list *wants*. Discuss the difference between needs and wants.
- Look at the cover of the book. Read the title. Note that there are four boys on the cover and a closeup of "those shoes." Call attention to the facial expressions of the boys. Discuss. Look at the back cover. Ask: Who do you think is the main character of this story? Why? Which boy seems different? What do you think this book is about?
- Talk about fads. What is a fad? (A fad is a fashion, notion, or behavior followed enthusiastically by a large number of people, generally for a short time; a craze.) Compare current fads and past fads. Ask: What makes something popular? Is there something really special that *you* want? Why do you want...

(name items mentioned by children)? How do you feel when you don't have or aren't able to get something that is popular? Discuss.

- Look at the front endpapers. Ask: What season is it? (It's fall.)
- Look at the back endpapers. Ask again: What season is it? (It's winter.) Tell children to keep that in mind as you read the story.
- Look at the title page spread. Ask: Where does this story take place? (It takes place in a city.) How do we know? (There are tall, large buildings, an expanse of concrete.)
- Say: Let's read to find out about the boy on the cover and why he is frowning.

While Reading:

- Show the first full-page spread. Ask: What is the main character looking at? (He's looking at a billboard ad.)
- Read aloud the first several pages. Discuss how Jeremy is feeling. (He feels frustrated, sad, embarrassed, left out.)
- Read about Jeremy's visit to Mr. Alfrey and when he returns to the classroom. Ask: What clues in the illustrations help us to know how Jeremy is feeling? (Clues are: facial expressions, hunched shoulders at door to classroom.)
- Ask: What clues in the words help us to know how Jeremy is feeling? (He says, "...my grip is so tight on my pencil I think it might bust.")
- Ask: How would you feel if you were Jeremy? Discuss.
- Read aloud the next several spreads in which Jeremy and his grandmother are shopping and he purchases a pair of "those shoes" that are too small for his feet. Ask: How would you feel if you were Jeremy and you realized that your grandmother thinks those shoes are too expensive? Do you think Jeremy made a wise decision buying those shoes at the thrift store? Discuss. Have you ever done anything like this? Explain.

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- Read aloud the next part of the story when we encounter Antonio and his worn-out shoes. Jeremy makes a tough decision about his too-small shoes. Discuss.
- Read aloud the next page. Jeremy feels both happy for Antonio and mad about the “Mr. Alfrey” shoes. Ask: Can we feel both happy and sad at the same time? Explain, using personal experiences.
- Read to the end of the story. Discuss the story’s resolution.
- Return to the endpapers at the front and back of the book and discuss why the endpapers were illustrated as they are. (They show the elapsed time of the story.)

Follow-Up:

- Return to the class-generated list of needs and wants. In a different color, list Jeremy’s needs and wants as we know them from the story.
- Discuss in detail the friendship between Antonio and Jeremy.
- Discuss the qualities of a true friend.
- Ask: Do you think Jeremy is an everyday hero?

Extension Activities:

- Read about children from other parts of the world who are less fortunate, and discuss their needs. Explore ways in which we can be everyday heroes by helping those in need.
- Make a list of the qualities a true friend possesses.

Writing Activities:

- On cutouts of high-top shoes, have students list what they consider their most important needs.
- Have students interview each other about their wants and write feature stories. Students will ask who, what, and why questions and include the answers in the feature story.
- Have students interview their parents about a fad they loved and report back to the class. Encourage them to bring in the item, if possible. Share Boelts’s story about the writing of this book with children to begin or cap class reports.

What a Pair!

Follow up with *My Shoes and I*, written by René Colato Laínez and illustrated by Fabricio Vanden Broeck (Boyds Mills, 2010), about a boy making his way from El Salvador to the United States in the new shoes his mother has sent to him. For activities about children immigrating to America, go to <http://activities.macmillanmh.com/reading/treasures/stories/olteachres/2101085.html>. For an amazing book on the immigrant experience suitable for grades 3 and up, see the wordless book *The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan (Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2006).

Additional pairs: *Which Shoes Would You Choose?* by Betsy R. Rosenthal, illustrated by Nancy Cote (Putnam, 2010); *Whose Shoes? A Shoe for Every Job*, by Stephen R. Swinburne (Boyds Mills, 2010); and *Whose Shoes Are These? A Look at Workers’ Footwear: Flippers, Sneakers, and Boots*, by Laura Purdie Salas, illustrated by Amy Bailey Meuhlenhardt (Picture Window Books, 2006).

More, More, More!

Related poetry: *Barefoot: Poems for Naked Feet*, by Stefi Weisbud, illustrated by Lori McElrath-Eslick (Wordsong, 2008), is a compilation of poems about “feet at their freest.”

For poems about school friendships, see *Rufus and Friends: School Days*, by Iza Trapani (Charlesbridge, 2010).



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