
THE CAROUSEL

Author: Liz Rosenberg
Illustrator: Jim LaMarche
Publisher: Harcourt Brace

THEME:

A legacy is passed from one generation to another, connecting the past with the present and the future—much like a carousel that moves in a circle, with no beginning and no end.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

A carousel is the backdrop for this sensitive story about sisters who search for memories of their mother's legacy.

LeVar explores the power of tradition as children share legacies that have been passed on to them. A quilt maker explains the process of making a quilt, and tells how she is passing the tradition on to her grandniece. Viewers meet a man who, with the help of Harlem school children, has designed animal shapes for a carousel he is rebuilding in the community.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Before viewing the program, obtain a copy of the book and read the story to the students up to the point where the girls have fixed the carousel and need to tame the horses. Have students brainstorm ways to bring the horses back. Then finish the story to see how the author solved the problem.

Discuss items that have been passed down through generations in students' families. Talk about who these items belonged to in the past, who has them now, and the special significance they have. Teachers might model this discussion by sharing a story about an heirloom from their own family.

In the program, LeVar defines "legacy." Invite students to share legacies they might wish to pass to their children and grandchildren.

Discuss what it means to have an imagination. List all the students' ideas on the board or a chart, and have them formulate a definition of "imagination."

In this story, one "answer" to the question, "What if carousel horses came to life?" is presented. Brainstorm with the students other possibilities for "what if..." questions when inanimate objects come to life. Save the ideas so that students searching for fantasy story writing topics may use them.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students write additional adventures for the two sisters on carousel horses. Where will they go? What will they do?

Make a class "Memory Box." At the end of each week, discuss possible items to be placed in the box and, as a class, choose one. The item for the box might be an actual object, or it might be a description of something which happened that made the week memorable. On the last day of school, open the box and discuss the memories from the school year.

In a space large enough for creative movement, pantomime the motion of a carousel. Before doing the actions, discuss how a carousel starts slowly, gradually increases in speed (both forward and up-and-down), and then gradually slows again until it comes to a stop. Play appropriate carousel music to accompany this movement.

Lippizaners are mentioned in the story. Have students research them and other breeds of horses. Have them record their findings on a chart that tells the distinguishing characteristics of each type.

Have the students make carousel horses. Include a variety of materials for them to use in addition to paper, such as cloth, glitter, ribbon, assorted fabric trims, etc. For small horses, drinking straws may serve as the poles. For larger horses, students might work with partners and use cardboard wrapping paper rolls for poles. In both instances, they will need two horses identically decorated so that the insides can be glued together with the "pole" between them. Display the smaller horses by placing the straw poles in small bits of clay and setting them on a "lazy Susan" or similar object that will turn around. Display the larger horses going up and down around the classroom walls.

Use the story to review the concepts of fantasy and reality. Make a two-column chart, with the words "Fantasy" and "Reality" at the top of the columns. Have students brainstorm events from the story and decide whether they could really happen or not. Record the story events in the appropriate column on the chart.

In the story, one of the sisters lured the horses back to their places on the carousel by playing "Clair de Lune" by Debussy. Obtain a recording of this piece and play it for the students. Discuss how it made them feel and why it was a good choice for bringing the horses back.

Have students write a "Fix-It" Handbook. Brainstorm with the students a list of things they know how to fix. Have them write a page of instructions describing how to fix an object, illustrating their directions if necessary. Compile their pages into a handbook.

RELATED THEMES:

family traditions
imagination
merry-go-rounds
memories

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #22 — The Patchwork Quilt

Program #106 — The Lotus Seed

Program #93 — Mrs. Katz And Tush

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Liz Rosenberg is an award-winning poet and the author of several books for children. She teaches creative writing at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where she lives with her husband and son.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

Jim LaMarche has worked as a commercial artist and portraitist and has illustrated many books for children, including the prize-winning *Rainbabies*. A Wisconsin native, he presently lives in Santa Cruz, California, with his wife and three sons.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

UP AND DOWN ON THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, illus. by Ted Rand (Henry Holt)

THE ALWAYS PRAYER SHAWL

by Sheldon Oberman, illus. by Ted Lewin (Boyd's Mills Press)

THE LONG SILK STRAND: A GRANDMOTHER'S LEGACY
TO HER GRANDDAUGHTER

by Laura E. Williams, illus. by Grayce Bochak (Boyd's Mills Press)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

THE MEMORY BOX

by Mary Bahr, illus. by David Cunningham (Albert Whitman)

THE WOODEN DOLL

by Susan Bonners (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)

CAROUSEL ROUND AND ROUND

by Kay Chorao (Clarion)

CAROUSEL

by Donald Crews (Greenwillow)

RETURNING NICHOLAS

by Deborah Durland DeSaix (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)

MY MAMA HAD A DANCING HEART

by Libba Moore Gray, illus. by Raúl Colón (Orchard)

BASKET

by George Ella Lyon, illus. by Mary Szilagyi (Orchard)

SNOW RIDERS

by Constance McGeorge, illus. by Mary Whyte (Chronicle Books)

THE KEEPING QUILT

by Patricia Polacco (Simon & Schuster)

THE SONG OF THE LAST MIGUEL

by Carol Saul. (Whispering Coyote)

BRINGING THE FARMHOUSE HOME

by Gloria Whelan, illus. by Jada Rowland (Simon & Schuster)

