
THE PURPLE COAT

Author: Amy Hest

Illustrator: Amy Schwartz

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

THEME:

It's great to try something new...even if you're not sure that you'll like it.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Every year Gabby's grandfather, a tailor, makes her a new blue coat. Despite her mother's reminder that "navy blue is what you always get," Gabby begs her grandfather to make her a beautiful purple fall coat.

LeVar takes viewers to the Fashion Institute of Technology and to New York City's garment district to explore the fascinating world of clothing design, and then gets a coat made especially for him. Viewers also meet an artist who creates caricatures of people out of papier-maché.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

The story does not say why Gabby wanted a purple coat this year instead of her usual navy blue one. Discuss with students why they think she wanted the purple coat.

Using the reversible navy blue and purple coat that Grampa made to please both Gabby and her mother as an example, introduce the concept of "compromise" to the class. Invite the students to share experiences in which they had to compromise so that both they and someone else were happy. Discuss the importance of compromise in daily life.

Ask students to describe an instance in which they tried something new and were pleasantly surprised by the outcome.

Changes can be both exciting and scary. Invite students to share a major change that occurred in their lives and how they coped with it.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Provide students with an outline of a coat on heavy paper or tagboard. Make available scraps of fabric, buttons, pieces of wallpaper, fabric trims, ribbons, glitter, yarn, etc., and have students design a coat. Display all the coats on a string "clothesline" in the classroom.

Have a "Crazy Clothes" dress-up day in the classroom. Advertise this day to parents well ahead of time so that students can be thinking of outrageous combinations of clothing to wear. Students might wear clothes inside out,

in unusual places, or with other items of clothing they would never consider wearing together. Be sure to have a "fashion show" in the classroom for students to model their "creations."

At the beginning of the program, LeVar is riding a subway. Some students may have no concept of a subway. Discuss why it would be a desirable way to travel in the city. Brainstorm a list of other means of transportation that people use in the city. Make a list of types of transportation that people use in rural areas. Compare the two lists, discussing why some are unique to the type of community, whereas others are suited to both urban and rural environments.

Make a color bar graph of the coats and jackets that the students wear to school on a given day. Examine the graph to determine the most popular color of coat or jacket. Other possibilities for data gathering include: the number of coats versus jackets, whether the coats and jackets are plain or have writing on them (e.g., a team jacket), if the coats have buttons or a zipper, etc.

Have students utilize both color and elements of design by making a tie-dye cloth. Cut some squares of cloth into pieces about the size of a large handkerchief. Fold each of the pieces a different way. For example, tie one piece into a big knot; fold one into an accordion and tie it closed in a couple of places with some string; twist one piece and tie the twists closed in several places. Soak the cloths in water and then put them in a cold-water dye solution (follow the instructions on the dye packet). Rinse the cloths in water, untie them, and allow them to dry. After they are dry, iron the cloths to set the dye. Students might wear their cloth around their necks for a tie, hang it from their pockets, or appliqué it (with parental assistance) onto a t-shirt.

In the program, Gabby's grandfather goes through the process of making a coat, showing all of his steps from selecting the fabric to the finished garment. With the help of the library media specialist, have students investigate processes for making other items or foods. Several **Reading Rainbow** programs demonstrate processes, such as making crayons (*How Much Is a Million?*), making pasta (*The Robbery at the Diamond Dog Diner*), making cheese (*The Milk Makers*), and others. Working in cooperative groups, have students make a mural that shows how something is made step-by-step. Allow each group to share its findings and display the murals in the classroom.

Continue the story of Gabby by sharing the sequel, *Gabby Growing Up* (see Supplementary Booklist) with the class. Discuss the function of a sequel, as a continuation of a story with the same characters.

Solicit the assistance of some parent volunteers and make papier maché objects. Balloons that have been blown up, cardboard rolls, oatmeal boxes, and other containers that provide shape make good bases. Strips of news-

paper dipped in wallpaper paste (dry, mixed with water) is messy, but not too difficult to handle if students slide the excess paste off the strips before they apply them to the base. Revisit the segment of the program in which the artist demonstrates papier maché and then have students decide what they want to create before they begin. Remember the figure must be completely dry before it is painted.

RELATED THEMES:

clothing
factories
creative design

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #42 — Rumpelstiltskin
Program #33 — Imogene’s Antlers

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Amy Hest grew up in a suburb of New York City and worked as a children’s librarian and in the children’s book department of several publishing houses before devoting most of her time to writing children’s books. She states that her books are about real people, often people in her own family, “with new names but familiar personality traits.” More often than not, the setting for her stories is New York City, where she makes her home with her husband and children.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

Some of Amy Schwartz’s strongest childhood memories involve books. She loved to draw and paint, took art classes as a child, and wrote stories in elementary school. After art school, she had a series of jobs before becoming a freelance illustrator. Her first book was *Bea and Mr. Jones*, a **Reading Rainbow** feature book. She makes her home in New York.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

PABLO PICASSO
by Ibi Lepsky, illus. by Paola Cardoni, trans. by Howard Rodger MacLean (Barron’s)

THE GOAT IN THE RUG
by Charles L. Blood & Martin Link, illus. by Nancy Winslow Parker (Four Winds)

HOW A BOOK IS MADE
by Alike (Crowell)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

JUST LIKE MAX
by Karen Ackerman, illus. by George Schmidt (Alfred A. Knopf)

CLANCY’S COAT
by Eve Bunting, illus. by Lorinda Bryan Cauley (Warne)

CHARLIE NEEDS A CLOAK
by Tomie dePaola (Prentice-Hall)

MS. MOJA MAKES BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES
by Jill D. Duvall, photos by Lili Duvall (Children’s Press)

GABBY GROWING UP
by Amy Hest, illus. by Amy Schwartz (Simon & Schuster)

THE RAG COAT
by Lauren Mills (Little, Brown)

WARM CLOTHES
by Gail Saunders-Smith (Cobblestone/Pebble)

KATIE’S TOO-BIG COAT
by Jane Stephens, illus. by Nancy Poydar (Simon & Schuster)

A NEW COAT FOR ANNA
by Harriet Ziefert, illus. by Anita Lobel (Alfred A. Knopf)

