



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES K-3**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo**

Judy Blume

**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo

Judy Blume

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, visualizing, classifying and categorizing, synthesizing, analyzing

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, cause/effect, drawing conclusions

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, conflict, plot development, mood

### Writing

Narrative, limerick, sentences

### Vocabulary

Contractions, context clues, pantomime or dramatize words

### Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussions, and cooperative groups, entertain others with dramatic activities

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## Summary

Freddy Dissel has a left-out feeling. It is hard to be the child in the middle, squeezed between an older brother and a younger sister. Freddy finally gets an opportunity to do something that his brother and sister have never done. Here's his chance to show everyone just how special he is!

## About the Author

Judy Sussman Blume was born February 12, 1938 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She married John Blume, an attorney, August 15, 1959, who she divorced in 1975. She has two children, a son and a daughter. She attended New York University, and received a B.A. degree in 1960. She is a writer of juvenile and adult fiction.

Blume has said, "I was a somewhat fearful child. Perhaps imaginative children always are. Thunderstorms terrified me. They still do. As I grew older, I had a lot of tensions and problems. I didn't find any real satisfaction in reading until I was older. Because there weren't any books with characters who felt the way I felt, who acted the way I did, with whom I could identify. I think I write the kinds of books I would have liked to read when I was young."

In 1966 Blume began writing children's stories. Having no publishing success, she decided to take a writing class at New York University. She enjoyed it so much that she took it a second time. It was during this time that she learned about the professional world, and wrote one version of *The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo*, and finished her first longer book, *Iggie's House*. Both were subsequently published in 1969, after being revised.

Of these books she has said, "They were imitations of books I'd admired, but I learned something from them. The most important lesson was that until you pull it out of your own heart, it doesn't really work."

Blume has defined her thoughts about her readers and her work: "Kids live in the same world as adults do. They see things and hear things. Problems only get worse when there are secrets, because what kids imagine is usually scarier than the truth. Kids have a right to read about themselves. Being a kid is a universal joy, and a universal problem. I write about people, their relationships to each other and their feelings. My responsibility to be honest with my readers is my strongest motivation. I am offended by dishonest books."

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## Chapter 2—Pages 12-22

### Vocabulary

special 13	mumbled 15	auditorium 15	hollered 15
attention 19	choked 20		

### Vocabulary Activity

In this chapter, Freddy is unhappy and mumbles something as he walks away from his teacher. (page 15)

Show us how Freddy might look and sound as he does this.

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Start a story map. Fill it in as the story evolves. Many stories have the same parts: a setting, problem, characters, goal, and a series of events that lead up to an ending or conclusion. These story elements can be placed on a story map. Just as a road map leads a driver from one place to another, so, too, a story map leads a reader from one point to another. (See page 14 of this guide.)
2. Why does Freddy want to be in the school play? (*Page 13, Mike and Ellen have never been in a play. This is a chance for Freddy to do something that his brother and sister have not done.*)
3. Who is giving the play? (*Page 15, The play is being given by the fifth and sixth graders.*)
4. What does Freddy have to do to audition for a part in the play? (*Page 16 and page 19, Freddy has to talk in a very loud voice, and jump around the stage.*)
5. Look at the illustrations on pages 18 and 19. They picture Freddy jumping. Show us some Freddy-like jumps.
6. What part does Freddy have in the play? (*Page 19, Freddy is the Green Kangaroo.*) What do you think that a Green Kangaroo would do in a play? List responses.
7. How do you think that Freddy feels when he is told by Ms. Matson that he has the part of the Green Kangaroo?
8. Why do you think that Freddy waits until the family is at the dinner table to tell them about his part in the play?
9. The chapter ends with Freddy saying to his family, " 'It's true. Just me. All by myself—the only Green Kangaroo in the play.' " Why do you think that Freddy says this? Is this really very important to him?
10. Read this chapter aloud. Give out parts to the children in the group. Ask that each become that person in the story, and have the feelings of that person. Think about how that person would sound as the part is read.

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11. How would you look as a Green Kangaroo? Make an illustration of you doing something as a Green Kangaroo. Write a sentence to go with your illustration.

## Chapter 3—Pages 23-37

### Vocabulary

dreamed 23      neighbors 26      ruffled 27      stomach 29      bounced 29

### Vocabulary Activity

In this chapter, Ms. Gumber ruffles Freddy's hair. (page 27) Would someone volunteer to ruffle his/her hair for us?

### Chapter Prereading Activity

Have you ever been in a play? What *might* happen to Freddy? good things? bad things? List responses of the children, using a T-diagram. For example:

Good Things	Bad Things
Audience likes Freddy.	Freddy gets scared.
Audience claps.	Freddy forgets what he is to do.
Family thinks that Freddy is special.	Freddy trips and falls.

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. How long before the play does Freddy have to practice being a Green Kangaroo? (page 23, two weeks) What does he do? (Page 23, He jumps and makes kangaroo faces in front of the mirror.)
2. Freddy even dreams of Green Kangaroos. Look at the illustration on pages 24 and 25. What would you and a Green Kangaroo do in your dream?
3. What does "break a leg" mean? (Page 27, " 'That means good luck when you're in a play.' ")
4. Who makes the costume for Freddy? (Page 27, The girls in the sixth grade.)
5. How do you think that Freddy feels in the costume?
6. What happens just before Freddy is to go on stage? (Page 29, His heart begins to beat faster, his stomach bounces up and down, and he feels funny.) Do you think that this is unusual? Why? Why not?
7. How do you think that you would feel on the stage in front of many people?