



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES K-3

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney

Judith Viorst

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney

Judith Viorst

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

Vocabulary

Context clues

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, drama

Comprehension

Predicting

Literary Elements

Point of view, story elements

Writing

Lists

Summary

The storyteller is a young boy whose cat Barney has died. He tells of his grief, and of the suggestion made by his mother that he think of ten good things about Barney to tell about at the burial. Able to think of only nine, the boy and his father later talk about a “pretty nice job for a cat” while they are working in the garden. The boy decides that this job of helping the earth is, indeed, “the tenth good thing about Barney.”

About the Author

Judith Stahl Viorst was born in Newark, New Jersey. She was educated at Rutgers University, where she received a B.A. degree. She married Milton Viorst, a writer. They have three children, Anthony, Nicholas, and Alexander.

Viorst is a poet, journalist, and an author of children’s books. Her poetic monologs written for the CBS special, “Annie, The Women in the Life of a Man” won her an Emmy Award in 1970. She started writing at the age of seven, but had no real success until she began writing about herself, her husband, her marriage, and her children.

Of her work she has said, “Most of my children’s books are for or about my own children, and mostly they’re written to meet certain needs. When a lot of questions about death were being raised around our house, my struggle for a way to respond to those questions resulted in the Barney book. It’s quite terrific to be a working mother whose research, for the most part, consists of hanging around the house. My husband is the harshest critic and greeter and encourager of my books and without him there wouldn’t be any. Not one word I wrote was ever published until we were married.”

Introductory Information and Activities

Initiating Activities:

You may choose to do one of the following activities before reading the story, and the other(s) after the story has been read. However, they are appropriate at any time.

1. **Pet Loss:** If you are using this story because a child in the group has recently lost a pet, it is suggested that you also read to the children the book authored by Fred Rogers, *When A Pet Dies*. (See Informational Bibliography/Children.)

Have a group discussion about the feelings accompanied by loss. Allow plenty of time for this so that everyone who wishes to do so has an opportunity to share. Each child needs to know that others have had similar experiences. (See Teacher Information/Loss of a Pet.)

2. **Pets:** Make a copy of a poem about a pet and have it in the area where the children will gather. (See Bibliography/dePaola, and Prelutsky.)

After the children have gathered, read them the poem that you have chosen, and make reference to the bulletin board. (See Bulletin Board Ideas/Pets.) Discuss pets with the children. How many in the group have pets? What kinds of pets do they have? Where are the pets housed? Who takes care of the pets? etc.

Use this information to make one or more graphs. (See Supplementary Activities/Graphing.)

3. **Pet Names:** Think of some common pet names that you have heard, place those on banners and streamers, and hang them around the room. Include some of the names of pets from books with which the children might be familiar. (Harry, Clifford, Pinkerton, Clyde, Snoopy, etc.)

If you have a pet, use your pet's name and make up a limerick about it. If not, pick a name that appeals to you. (Rhyme pattern of limerick is aabba.) Print out the limerick, and have that in the area where the children will gather.

For example:

I have a dog, his name is Clyde.
He's two feet tall, and three feet wide.
He likes to sleep, and he likes to eat.
And when he walks, he barely moves his feet.
He's really built for taking a ride, is Clyde.

After the children come together, ask them if any of them can read the names on the streamers. Have volunteers do that. Read the limerick to the children. Discuss the names of pets, and how they happened to be given the names that they have.

Ask volunteers to make illustrations of their pets, and to write explanations to go with them as to why the pets were named as they are. Put these on the bulletin board. (See Bulletin Board Ideas/Pet Names.)

Bulletin Board Ideas:

1. **Pets:** Cover the bulletin board with background paper. If you have, or have had, a pet, put some pictures of your pet on the bulletin board. If you do not have a pet, find some pictures in magazines of people with their pets, and place a few of those on the bulletin board. These will be taken down when the children make or bring pictures of their pets to share and these are put onto the board.

You may decide that you really like some of the poems that you have located about different pets, and want to add one of those to the display, too.

2. **Pet Names:** Cover the bulletin board with background paper. Make a caption for it, such as: "What's In A Name?" Display the illustrations and explanations of pet names made by the children. (See Initiating Activity/Pet Names.)

Prereading Activity:

Show the children the picture on the cover of the book. Have a volunteer read the title. Make predictions as to what the story will be about. Record the predictions. Check them after the story has been read. Did the illustrator, Erik Blegvad, give some clues to the reader?

Procedure:

It is recommended that this story be read in its entirety, and the guide is written to follow this procedure. If you choose to do it in sections, it is recommended that the story be read from pages 3 through 15, and from pages 16 through 24.

The Questions and Activities, as well as the Supplementary Activities, are provided so that you may, using discretion, make selections from them that will be suitable for the use by the children in your group. It is not intended that everything be done.

For the vocabulary words, you may wish to have the children show knowledge of the words

Supplementary Activities

1. **Map It:** Make a story map. Many stories have the same parts: A setting, a problem, characters, a goal, and a series of events that lead to an ending or resolution of the problem. These elements may be placed on a story map. Just as a road map leads a driver from one place to another, a story map leads a reader from one point to another. (See page 23 of this guide.)
2. **Ten Good Things:** Think of ten good things about yourself, a friend, a pet, or a family member. Write out a list of ten good things, if you can. Is it easy or difficult to think of ten?
3. **Butter Cookies:** Make some butter cookies to go with the orangeade. Follow the directions given in the recipe. Use your own recipe or that of someone else, some refrigerated dough from the store, or try one that follows. Enjoy!

Butter Mix Cookies

1/3 cup soft butter*	1/2 cup shortening*
2 egg yolks	1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 package (2 layer) yellow cake mix	

*Do not use all butter or all shortening.

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Mix butter, shortening, egg yolks and vanilla. Thoroughly blend in dry cake mix, 1/3 at a time. (If dough is dry, add 1 to 1-1/2 teaspoons water, and blend well.) Form scant teaspoonfuls of dough into balls and place on ungreased baking sheet. Bake 8 to 12 minutes. Cool cookies slightly before removing from baking sheet.

Chocolate Nut Butter Cookies

2-1/2 cups sifted flour	3/4 teaspoon salt
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Sift above ingredients together, and set aside.

1 cup soft butter	1 teaspoon vanilla
3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar	

Combine above ingredients together in a bowl and beat until creamy. Gradually add the flour mixture. Stir in the following:

2 cups chopped nuts
1 6 ounce package (1 cup) semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Form into 1 inch balls, and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. While still warm, roll in granulated or sifted confectioners' sugar, if desired. Cool and roll again in sugar, if necessary.

4. **Graphing:** Use large butcher or craft paper. Make a large grid on the paper. Make a thick baseline on the graph, and record the kinds of pets that were discussed in the initiating activity. Also have a space for "none."

Give each child a piece of paper that will fit into a grid box. Child is to record own name on the paper, and attach the paper to the graph, using a gluestick. Remind children to start at the baseline, and to move up from there.

16. **Tenth:** Look around the room and the building. Find and mark the tenth of everything that you can. You MUST mark the starting point in some way, so that everyone will know that position. Can you find the tenth floor tile from the door? the tenth book on the shelf? the tenth hook or locker?
17. **Story Pet Limericks:** Make up some class limericks about pets the children have met in “lighter” stories that they have read. (Harry, Clifford, Pinkerton, etc.)

The rhyme pattern for a limerick is aabba. Yes, you may have to “invent” some words to fit in the rhyme, but that is permitted in a limerick! (See Initiating Activities/Pet Names for one example.) Another example:

*I've read of a dog, name of Harry,
That often did things that were scary.
He once paddled alone in the sea,
Where you surely wouldn't find me,
And caused the people to starey.*

*Pinkerton, a great dane very large,
Would often into competitions just barge.
He'd always take a trophy or cup.
All he had to do was show up!
For him, there was never a charge.*

The children may wish to make up their own limericks, and to illustrate them. A book may be made to share, and kept in the reading area.

Center Activities

Tangram Center

Use the seven pieces of the tangram set. Try to make a cat out of the seven pieces. Show your cat to a classmate. Can your classmate make a different cat?

Give your tangram cat a name. Tell us something about it. What does it like to eat? What does it like to do? What do you like best about your tangram cat?

