

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Angel's Mother's Boyfriend

by
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Book Information

Judy Delton, Angel's Mother's Boyfriend

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Book Level: 4.8

Interest Level: MG

Ten-year-old Angel finds plenty to worry about when she learns that her mother's new boyfriend is a clown.

Topics: Family Life, Single Parents; Humor/Funny, Funny; People, Clowns; Series, Angel

Main Characters

Angel O'Leary the principal character in the story, who has mixed feelings and outrageous conclusions concerning her mother and her mother's boyfriend

Edna Angel's friend, who has many ideas to help Angel through her troubles

Mrs. O'Leary Angel's mother, who is hoping her new boyfriend is accepted by her children

Rags Angel's younger brother

Rudy the man Mrs. O'Leary meets on vacation; a professional clown who comes to stay with the O'Learys

Vocabulary

frivolous not serious or sensible in matter

improbable unlikely

inedible not suitable for food

trench coat a loose-fitting belted raincoat, with pockets and flaps suggesting a military style

Synopsis

Angel O'Leary thinks her mother is in serious trouble with the government because she receives frequent letters from Washington, D.C. Together with her friend, Edna, Angel decides Mrs. O'Leary must owe a lot of money in taxes. To keep her mother out of the clutches of "kidnapers," the two girls decide to

earn money with a dog laundry, which brings them one hundred twenty dollars.

Eventually, the truth comes out, and Angel learns the letters are coming from Rudy, a man her mother met while on vacation in Canada. Rudy lives in Washington, D.C., and is a professional clown who is currently unemployed. When he decides to visit Mrs. O'Leary, Angel worries about the effect he will have on the family. Rudy comes to Wisconsin and spends his time learning all about the O'Learys. He even gets a new job at the local television station doing a show for children. Angel is relieved when he rents a room, and she gets back her own room.

After a separation at Christmas when Rudy visits his parents in Washington, Angel realizes how much she cares about Rudy and how much her family has come to depend on him. His ability to "save the day" when their dinner party is nearly ruined by a green ham proves to Angel just how magical Rudy is in their lives. As the story ends, Rudy and Angel's mother announce their plans to marry, and Angel declares that they all love Rudy.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why is Angel so concerned about Rudy's profession as a clown?

The students' responses should indicate an understanding of peers' opinions, embarrassment about others finding out Rudy is a clown, and concern or worry that Rudy may humiliate Angel in some way.

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Literary Analysis

What kind of change does Angel go through in the story?

It takes her a while, but she comes to the realization that her family will change for the better with the addition of Rudy. He is not the enemy and becomes a welcome addition to their life. She overcomes her fear that he may leave them and includes herself within the circle of people who would miss him if he left.

Inferential Comprehension

Angel makes it very clear that Rags and her mother would miss Rudy if he went away. Why do you think she doesn't include herself in that thought?

Angel worries about becoming too attached to Rudy, only to have him leave; she is used to being without a father; she has taken care of Rags and has a difficult time having Rudy take on that role. She is frightened to love him.

Constructing Meaning

Write about the biggest change you have had to face in your life. How did this change affect you and your family? Was it a positive or negative change? What feelings and thoughts did you have during this time?

Answers will vary depending upon the topics students choose.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The story takes place in a unnamed town in Wisconsin. Other cities, states, and countries are mentioned. Have students identify these places and plan a vacation for the O'Learys. Students should include relevant information when making travel plans. For example, what currency is needed when in Canada? Have students investigate the cost of the vacation using several modes of transportation, such as air, train, auto, and bus. What might the family be interested in seeing while in Washington, D.C.? Have students plan

an itinerary, budget, and photo album of their vacation. Ask students for suggestions as to what else they would need to find out before taking their trip.

Understanding Literary Features One continuous theme throughout the story is how difficult it is to handle change in one's life. What changes are Angel, Rags, Mrs. O'Leary, and Rudy anticipating? (Students should present different ideas for each character). Have students write four separate journal entries, one for each of the characters listed. These characters should express their thoughts and opinions on how becoming a family will change their lives. Students should identify the positive and negative aspects. Who might find change the most difficult? Who might find it the easiest?

Understanding Characterization If Angel were asked to name the story's antagonist, she would most likely name Rudy. He seems intent on becoming part of the family, and Angel has some problems with that idea. If Angel were a lawyer, what specific things from the story would she use to identify Rudy as the antagonist? Students should identify at least ten reasons why she would "accuse" Rudy of being the antagonist. Why might it be difficult for the reader to identify Rudy as the antagonist?

Understanding the Author's Craft The story is definitely seen through the eyes of Angel. How might it be different if told through the eyes of Rags, Mrs. O'Leary, or Rudy? Have students re-write the Christmas scene where Rudy is away in Washington, D.C. The reader is aware how much the O'Learys miss him during that time. How do you think Rudy felt? Describe Christmas from his view as he spends it with his family. Create a Christmas card Rudy might have sent to the O'Learys.