

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Chocolate Fever by Robert Kimmel Smith

Book Information

Robert Kimmel Smith, Chocolate Fever
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From eating too much chocolate, Henry breaks out in brown bumps that help him foil some hijackers and teach him a valuable lesson about self-indulgence.

Topics: Food, Candy/Sweets; Food, Misc./Other; Health & Wellness, Doctor Visits; Humor/Funny, Funny; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 6-8

Main Characters

Alfred Cane (Sugar) the kindly candy manufacturer who gives Henry the cure for Chocolate Fever
Daddy Green Henry's father, who recites several bits of news for Henry when Henry returns home after his adventures
Dr. Fargo the insensitive doctor at the hospital who is overly excited by Henry's unusual disease; his lack of concern for Henry's feelings leads to Henry running away from the hospital
Elizabeth Green Henry's older sister; she is a very grown-up fourteen-year-old girl
Enid Green (Mama) Henry's indulgent mother, who continues to serve him chocolate even after Henry breaks out with Chocolate Fever from consuming too much chocolate
Henry Green the impulsive young boy who eats so much chocolate that he contracts Chocolate Fever; he runs away from the hospital and has several adventures before he is cured of his disease
Lefty one of the two bumbling hijackers; he helps steal Mac's truck because he thinks it is full of furs
Louie the other inept hijacker who helps to steal Mac's truck

Mac the gentle and good-hearted truck driver who gives Henry a ride and has his truck stolen by hijackers while he and Henry are stopped for dinner; Mac introduces Henry to Sugar Cane

Mark Green Henry's older brother, who is known for his politeness

Mr. Pangalos another teacher at Henry's school; Mrs. Kimmelfarber asks him for help with Henry's problem

Mrs. Kimmelfarber Henry's teacher, who takes him to the school nurse after she and another teacher cannot identify Henry's strange rash

Nurse Molly Farthing the remarkably calm nurse who examines Henry's spots and then takes Henry to the hospital; she is known for her insistence on a sterile office

Vocabulary

bluff to make a false show of bravery or confidence; to make up a story intended to fool someone
dumbfounded shocked into amazement or confusion
infirmary a place where sick or injured people go for medical help
phenomenon an event or thing that is extraordinary and often unexplainable
predicament a problem or difficult situation
unique one of a kind; different and unusual

Synopsis

Henry Green has always been allowed to eat as much chocolate as he wants. One Friday after his usual chocolate-laden breakfast, Henry feels strange. Sitting in Mrs. Kimmelfarber's math class, he suddenly notices a rash of small brown spots. He shows Mrs. Kimmelfarber, who takes Henry to another teacher, Mr. Pangalos. Mr. Pangalos is also mystified by the spots, so the two teachers whisk Henry to Nurse Farthing's office.

Nurse Farthing is examining Henry when his spots begin to break out with loud pops that scare both Henry and Mrs. Kimmelfarber. Nurse Farthing decides Henry must be taken to the hospital. By the

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time Henry gets to the hospital, the spots are so large that Dr. Fargo thinks Henry fell in a mud puddle. After testing the spots, Dr. Fargo discovers they are pure chocolate. A team of prodding doctors converges on Henry. Henry is so upset by this that he jumps up from the examining table and runs away.

While he is still trying to avoid the doctors, Henry takes a shortcut through a schoolyard. The children in the schoolyard surround Henry and begin harassing him about his strange spots, but Henry scares them away by telling them he has a contagious disease.

That evening as Henry continues his escape, he hitches a ride with a truck driver named Mac. Henry tries to keep Mac from seeing his spots, but Mac sees them when he turns on the light at dinnertime. Mac reassures Henry that he is not bothered by the spots and persuades Henry to call his parents. While the truck is stopped, two thieves named Lefty and Louie hijack the truck and kidnap Mac and Henry.

When the hijackers find out the truck is full of candy instead of the furs they had anticipated, they are upset, but they still take the truck to their hideout. As the hijackers are making plans, Mac and Henry begin to hear the barking of dogs. Suddenly, a pack of dogs bursts into the room and begins licking Henry. Mac uses the disturbance to disarm the thieves. The owners of the dogs soon arrive with the story that their pets suddenly sniffed the air and ran away from them. Lefty and Louie are arrested, and Mac and Henry set out to deliver the truck's cargo of chocolate.

Mac delivers the candy to a man named Alfred "Sugar" Cane, who sees Henry and invites him to his office. After asking Henry about his spots, Sugar Cane tells a story about another young man who ate so much chocolate that he contracted Chocolate Fever. Sugar agrees with Henry that part of the solution is to stop eating so much chocolate, but Sugar also gives Henry a box of vanilla pills to help cure Henry. Sugar admits that it was he who had

eaten too much chocolate.

By Sunday Henry is back at home. He is leery when his mother tells him he must see Dr. Fargo again, but he is happy with the stack of pancakes his mother serves him. When his mother offers him chocolate syrup to go with the pancakes, Henry turns it down. Still, he feels something is missing in his pancakes until he sprinkles cinnamon on them and takes a taste. Immediately, he starts thinking of all the different ways he can use cinnamon to flavor his meals. He then wonders whether it is possible to eat too much cinnamon.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Why is Henry allowed to eat so much chocolate?

Not only does Henry have overly indulgent parents who spoil him by letting him eat whatever he wants, but until Henry contracts Chocolate Fever, Henry does not suffer any ill effects from eating the chocolate. He does not have weight problems, stomachaches, skin blemishes, or cavities from eating so much chocolate.

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Literary Analysis

What kinds of things upset Henry and how does he react to them?

Henry is very sensitive to unpleasant situations: he is upset when the spots appear; he is frightened when his spots start popping into lumps; he finds the conditions in the hospital intolerable; and he finds the treatment he receives from the children in the schoolyard incomprehensibly cruel. As the story progresses, he also becomes rather sensitive about the judgment of others. He is ashamed of his appearance when the schoolchildren tease him. Not only does he try to keep Mac from seeing him, but he also tells Mac that he ran away because of his horrible appearance. However, Henry is better able to deal with hard situations when he has an adult to comfort him. He is remarkably carefree throughout the hijacking because Mac stays calm and keeps making him laugh, and he is better able to cope with the initial outbreak of his spots while Nurse Farthing is holding his hand.

Inferential Comprehension

How is Sugar Cane's reaction to Henry's spots different from Dr. Fargo's reaction?

In the first place, Sugar Cane immediately recognizes Henry's disease, knows the cause of the disease, and knows how to cure the disease. While Dr. Fargo also tries to treat Henry, he does not recognize or know anything about Henry's problem. Dr. Fargo is also different in that he does not really listen to what Henry thinks or how Henry feels. For Sugar Cane, half the solution to Henry's problem is getting Henry to talk to him about his problem and promise to think about how often he should really eat chocolate.

Constructing Meaning

How does Henry convince Mrs. Kimmelfarber that his spots are a serious problem?

Henry explains to Mrs. Kimmelfarber that his spots are not freckles because he has clear and delicate skin like his mother. He also emphasizes that the spots are a very recent development and that before that morning he had not seen any on himself.

Teachable Skills

Making Predictions Even though Henry's story has a happy ending, the author hints that Henry's problems may not be over. Have the students form small groups and write short skits about what they think might happen next to Henry. Have them perform their skits for the class after they have practiced them several times.

Extending Meaning Mac, Sugar Cane, and Nurse Farthing all act as impromptu parents for Henry, since his parents are not present when most of Henry's problems occur. Have the students decide who gives Henry the most valuable help. Have the students defend their choice with details from the book in a classroom discussion.

Recognizing Feelings The characters in the story have many different reactions to Henry's problems. Have the students compile a list of characters and label the reaction each character has to Henry's condition. The students should also create a collage of facial expressions from magazine pictures that they feel represent the reactions of the characters.

Responding to Literature Henry makes himself sick from eating too much chocolate. Have the students write about a time when they caused themselves problems by overindulging in something. How was their experience similar to Henry's and how was it different?