

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Paddington at Large by Michael Bond

Book Information

Michael Bond, Paddington at Large

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Well-meaning Paddington, a small bear from Peru, continues to fill the lives of the Brown family with unexpected adventures.

Topics: Animals, Bears; Classics, Classics (All); Countries/Regions, Peru; Series, Paddington Bear

Main Characters

Aunt Lucy Paddington's aunt, who lives in a retirement home in Lima, Peru

cleaning fluid demonstrator the Barkridge's store employee who is disgruntled when Paddington refuses to let him clean Paddington's hat

elevator operator the Barkridge's store employee who mistakenly believes Paddington has given him a Christmas tip

floor manager the Barkridge's store employee who is overjoyed that Paddington's misadventures result in increased sales

frying pan demonstrator the Barkridge's store employee who is frantic when Paddington loses his demonstration pancake

Granny Green the magazine cook whose toffee recipe Paddington attempts to make

Jonathan and Judy Brown the Brown children

Miss Deirdre Flint the cynical young actress in Mr. Price's play

Mr. Curry Paddington's cunning neighbor, who persuades others to do his chores

Mr. Gruber the owner of an antique shop who is Paddington's good friend

Mr. Harold Price a young playwright who gives Paddington the job of producing sound effects in his Christmas pantomime; he takes his play very seriously

Mr. Henry Brown the father of the Brown family, who likes to give his family nice surprises

Mr. Higgins the good-natured television salesman whom Paddington mistakes for an intruder

Mrs. Bird the Browns' housekeeper, who has a real affection for Paddington despite the havoc he causes

Mrs. Brown the mother of the Brown family, who usually takes Mrs. Bird's advice

Paddington (Mr. Brown) the thrifty little bear who lives with the Brown family; he frequently gets into mishaps

Ronnie Playfair a smarmy game show host who is frustrated when Paddington outwits him

Sir Mortimer Carroway a famous surgeon who operates on Paddington

Vocabulary

demonstration a presentation that shows how a product works to people who might buy the product

marmalade a clear sweet jelly with pieces of fruit and rind in it

ominously in a manner that predicts evil

pantomime a short play commonly performed at Christmas time in England

podium a raised platform on which a conductor stands to direct musicians

symphony a piece of music written for wind, string, and percussion instruments in an orchestra

tenpence a coin worth ten British pennies

Synopsis

Although Paddington, a bear adopted by the Browns, has peacefully occupied himself in his garden for weeks, Mrs. Bird, the Browns' housekeeper, fears he will soon get into trouble again. Her fears are confirmed one afternoon when Mr. Curry, the neighbor, tricks Paddington into pruning his apple tree and mowing his lawn. Paddington resents being tricked, but the idea of trimming a tree appeals to him. He anchors the branch to the ground with Mr. Curry's lawnmower and quickly removes the branch. However, he soon discovers that the mower was pulled into the tree

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when the branch fell, and he realizes that he still needs to mow the lawn. Sometime later Mrs. Bird witnesses Paddington crashing through Mr. Curry's fence with Mr. Brown's power mower. The uncontrolled mower whisks Paddington away. He eventually stops near the shop of his friend, Mr. Gruber, but not before he passes a police officer. Mr. Gruber hides Paddington from the police and then helps him return home.

The day after Paddington's lawnmower adventure, Mr. Gruber proposes a picnic in the park with Paddington and the Brown children. After the group has picnicked, Mr. Gruber treats everyone to tickets for the band concert. Paddington enjoys the concert but, being a thrifty bear, he worries that Mr. Gruber is being cheated when Judy Brown explains that one selection is from Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony." Paddington leaves to find Mr. Schubert and is directed to the bandstand. Unfortunately, the bandstand door locks behind Paddington after he enters, and he is trapped inside. Paddington's friends notice his disappearance just as a selection called "Surprise Symphony" starts. The conductor becomes annoyed when a strange thumping interferes with the concert. Suddenly the conductor rises into the air and falls over as Paddington surfaces beneath him through a hole Paddington has knocked in the floorboards. The audience decides it is an excellent "surprise" symphony.

One afternoon Paddington's nap is interrupted by a strange scraping noise in the ceiling. When he peers out the window he sees a snakelike, dangling object. He investigates and finds a strange man in the Browns' loft. Paddington quickly locks the man in and scurries to the police station. He tells his story, and the police rush him back to the Brown residence. The police are annoyed when they discover that the "criminal" is actually Mr. Higgins, a television salesman who is installing an aerial for the television Mr. Brown ordered as a surprise for the Brown family. Since Mr. Higgins sells two televisions to the policemen over a cup of tea, he is grateful to Paddington for the mix-up. Later that day Paddington becomes bored with the television, so he begins fiddling with it. When the Browns arrive,

they find a non-working television with parts scattered everywhere. When the children discover that Paddington is stuck inside the television, they hide Paddington's involvement by persuading their father to call Mr. Higgins instead of repairing the damage himself.

A few weeks later the Brown family watches a game show at Paddington's request. The family is baffled that Paddington is not present until they see that he is a contestant on the show. Paddington chooses to answer questions on mathematics. Ronnie Playfair, the host, is frustrated and embarrassed when Paddington is able to argue why his incorrect answers are actually correct. An audience favorite, Paddington eventually wins five hundred pounds. Paddington states that he will donate the majority of the money to the Home for Retired Bears in Lima where his Aunt Lucy lives.

One day Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Bird come home to a strange smell in the air and foggy kitchen windows. Inside Paddington is struggling with a batch of toffee. He found the recipe in a magazine, but something has gone wrong. He is startled to discover Mrs. Bird peering at him when he clears the fog from the window, and he sits on the kitchen floor to await her reaction. After entering the syrup-spattered kitchen, Mrs. Bird suggests that Paddington help her clean the kitchen. However, because Paddington experiences terrible pain as he attempts to stand, he is taken to the hospital by ambulance. At the hospital Sir Mortimer, the famous surgeon, removes a sticky patch of fur that caused Paddington's pain when he attempted to rise from the floor.

When Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Bird take Paddington Christmas shopping, they are hesitant to let Paddington shop alone but decide he will come to no harm in the bargain basement for a half-hour. In the basement, Paddington refuses a cleaning fluid salesman's offer to use Paddington's hat to demonstrate his product. When Paddington participates in a frying pan demonstration, he accidentally throws pancake batter into the audience. Paddington makes a hasty exit. Next,

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Paddington pays a man to take him on the advertised moon rocket trip to see Father Christmas. Paddington is disappointed when he discovers that he has mistaken an elevator for a rocket. When Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Bird collect Paddington, the floor manager actually thanks Paddington, since the cleaning fluid man used his product to clean people spattered with pancake batter. Both products are now selling well, and Paddington is rewarded with his own adviser to help him finish his shopping.

Harold Price takes Paddington to the theater to assist in the production of Mr. Price's play. To persuade Paddington to produce the sound effects, Mr. Price promises Paddington a small acting role. During the first performance, Price forgets his "secret plans," the disguised script Price needs to consult when he performs the role of Father Christmas. Paddington finds the "plans" and walks onto the darkened stage carrying a candle to deliver them to the desperate Price. When Price's beard catches fire from Paddington's candle flame, Paddington pulls Price's beard off. The audience loves the unusual ending, and the judges award Price the best play prize.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

How does Paddington feel about doing Mr. Curry's yard work?

Paddington has mixed feelings about helping Mr. Curry. Although he does not remember offering to help Mr. Curry and knows that Mr. Curry has a way of twisting things to confuse people, he feels obligated to do the chores since he did not object before Mr. Curry left. He obviously dislikes cutting grass and says that, if he had been asked only to cut the grass, he could pretend that he did not hear Mr. Curry's request. Since, however, he does like to use a saw, he looks forward to pruning the tree. He is also thrifty and likes the opportunity to earn extra bun money.

Literary Analysis

Paddington's misadventures unfold in a predictable pattern. Explain the pattern.

First, Paddington is generally engaged in an innocent, often productive activity. Then he becomes concerned about something and tries to take action. His actions are usually the result of hasty or uninformed decisions; the actions often generate unplanned results. When things become chaotic, Paddington is confused about what to do. Fortunately, when order is restored, Paddington's mishaps usually have an unexpected benefit for someone. Finally, the other characters are left wondering how Paddington has managed to escape his misadventures not only unscathed but also commended.

Inferential Comprehension

Why is it difficult for characters in the story to know exactly what happens in Paddington's misadventures?

Paddington seldom explains what happens, most often because he does not understand how events lead him to outcomes that are so different from what he anticipates. He often starts out with a clear plan, but ignorance about things like operating power mowers and following a recipe leads him to vastly different results. In addition, Paddington sometimes avoids explaining because he knows he will get into trouble if he does. Furthermore, since most of Paddington's mishaps end happily, it is not necessary for him to explain.

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Constructing Meaning

How can the reader tell that Ronnie Playfair feels that the show is out of control while Paddington is a contestant?

Everything about Paddington makes Ronnie nervous. Ronnie is surprised to discover that Paddington is a bear, and he is frustrated when Paddington causes the cameraman to fall when Paddington steps off his mark on the stage. Paddington's answers are different from the ones Ronnie has been given, and Ronnie is embarrassed that the audience takes Paddington's side when Paddington explains why his answers are correct. Last, Ronnie's body language suggests his discomfort. He fidgets with his clothes and looks at his watch, signs that he wishes that Paddington's segment were finished.

write a letter from Paddington that persuades Mr. Curry to forgive Paddington.

Making Predictions Mrs. Bird predicts that Paddington will get into trouble, and he often does! Ask students to predict another mishap that Paddington is likely to have and write a short story about it.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Details Students will probably agree that Paddington is an unusual bear in many respects. One unique aspect is Paddington's diet, which contains sweets like marmalade and toffee. Ask students to research bears to determine what bears actually eat. Then have students create restaurant menus that could persuade Paddington to eat a more "normal" diet. Suggest that students use creative names, verbal descriptions, and pictures to make their menus appealing to Paddington.

Describing Actions or Events Mr. Price is panic-stricken when he cannot find his "secret plans," which are actually the script that he needs when he forgets his lines in his play. Read a short Christmas play with students so they can observe how dialogue and stage directions are written. Then have students form groups to write and enact a script for the last scene in Mr. Price's play, including Paddington's unplanned entrance. Their scripts should include both dialogue and stage directions.

Identifying Persuasive Language Paddington is very worried that Mr. Curry will be upset with him after the lawnmower incident. Have the students