

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Chocolate Touch by Patrick Skene Catling

Book Information

Patrick Skene Catling, The Chocolate Touch
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Book Level: 4.7
Interest Level: MG

Instead of gold, everything John Midas touched turns to precious chocolate.

Topics: Fantasy/Imagination, Misc./Other; Food, Candy/Sweets; Mysteries, Magic

Main Characters

Dr. Cranium the family doctor who treats John

John Midas a greedy boy whose biggest fault is that he eats too much candy

Mr. and Mrs. Midas John's parents, who are very worried about John's candy eating

Susan John's friend and neighbor

Vocabulary

elixir a medicine regarded as a cure for all ills

enviously acting with resentful desire for another's possessions

indignant filled with anger aroused by something unjust, mean or unworthy

Synopsis

John Midas is a normal kid in most ways except that he eats too much candy. His candy eating worries his parents so much that they take him to the doctor for help. John does not understand the effects his candy eating is having on himself or his parents.

One day while headed to his friend Susan's house, he finds an old coin with the letters J.M. on it. He thinks it is odd that those are his initials, but he continues on his way. Strangely, he turns the wrong way and ends up in a store he's never seen before. There he is convinced to buy a box of chocolates with the strange coin. He does so, takes it home and discovers the box has only one chocolate inside.

After he eats the chocolate, he finds that everything he puts in his mouth is magically turned into chocolate. This seems wonderful until it starts affecting his friendships and schoolwork.

Little by little the magic becomes stronger until nearly everything he touches turns to chocolate. He does not know what to do about this problem until he turns his mother to chocolate by kissing her. At that moment he runs from the house looking for help and finds himself back in the candy store. The store owner tells John he must choose between getting rid of his chocolate touch and restoring his mother to life. John chooses to have the man help his mother. The man tells John to return home. Once home he finds that everything has returned to normal, and no one recalls what has happened that day. Through his experience, John learns that his selfishness and greed were hurting the people around him.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

The author portrayed John as a selfish boy who thought only of himself. Give examples of things he did that showed he sometimes cared about others.

He didn't want to bite into Susan's coin because he didn't want to ruin it. He tried to make Susan feel better by offering to jump rope with her.

Literary Analysis

The narrator once said that John Midas's only fault was that he was "candy mad." However, the reader can see this was not his only fault. Discuss what a fault is and what John's true faults were. Share what you think some of your own faults are.

A fault is a personal weakness. Greed and selfishness were John's faults.

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Inferential Comprehension

This story is the tale of King Midas with a twist. Find a copy of the King Midas story. Compare and contrast the events and lessons learned in each story.

Everything both touched turned to something else. Both received their special touch because of their own greed. They started losing people they cared about because of their touches.

Constructing Meaning

When things began turning to chocolate in his mouth, John Midas thought he had finally received something he had always dreamed of having. What would you wish for if you had found the magic coin and why? What could be the disadvantage of receiving your wish?

Answers will vary based on wishes.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Literary Features John got what he always wanted when his mouth magically turned everything to chocolate. Eventually, he found out that his dream wasn't all he had imagined it would be. Share a story of something you dreamed of having or doing but were disappointed by when you finally received or did it. Discuss why it wasn't as great as you had dreamed it would be.

Understanding the Author's Craft This story is a funny, modern twist on the old story of King Midas, who was so greedy he wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. Think of an old legend or tale. Rewrite it with a modern, humorous twist. Try to keep the main idea, lesson or moral the same.

Recognizing Plot Some people might say John was obsessed with chocolate. Many people have an obsession of one sort or another. Choose a character with an obsession, and write a story about what would happen if everything the character touched turned into the object of that obsession. The character could be a young

person who was obsessed with a video game or musical group, or an adult obsessed with a sports team or a hobby.

Understanding Characterization This book is reminiscent of the movie *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Most of the children in that story were harmed in one way or another because of their greed, just as John's life was. Watch the movie and take note of the consequences of the different characters' greed. Discuss how greed can ruin one's life.