



RedRover Readers Program

**Discussion and Activity
Guide for**

Oh Theodore! Guinea Pig Poems

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Concepts

- How can we learn about a guinea pig?
- Why do we talk to animals such as a guinea pig?
- In what ways can a guinea pig be a companion to someone?

Before Reading

Ask students if they have ever *seen* a guinea pig.

Share the book covers (front and back) with the students. Ask students to describe the cover. Allow students to form their own ideas; they can revise their ideas as you read the story.

Ask:

- Who is shown?
- Who is Theodore?
- What is the guinea pig eating?

Share the inside cover with the students.

- What do the dotted lines show?
- What is pictured on the floor?
- Who might be running around?

During Reading

Tell students there are 34 poems in the book. Together the poems tell a story. After listening to the first poem, predict what you think the story will be about.

Read the first poem aloud.

Ask students: What animal does the boy adopt? Why?

Reread the first poem. Ask students, "What do you think this story will be about?"

Continue reading the poems. Emphasize the poems' titles as you read. Ask students to listen for the title of the book while you are reading.

When you read the poem, "Oh, Theodore!" ask, "Why do you think the boy is smiling? "Why does he say, 'Oh, Theodore!' (with an exclamation point!)"

After the poem, "Danger," ask, "How do you think Theodore feels in this picture? (How do you know?)

After reading the poem, "Statue," ask, "Why does the boy act like this?"

After reading the poem, “At Last,” ask, “Why do you think this poem is titled, “At Last?”

After reading the poem, “Come Back,” ask, “How do you think the boy feels?” (How do you know? (Why do you think he feels this way? How do you think you’d feel in this situation?)

After Reading

Ask students:

- List three things Theodore the guinea pig likes and three things he does not like. (write these ideas on the board)
- How does the boy learn about Theodore? What does Theodore need to be healthy, happy and safe? (write these ideas on the board)
- What can we learn about animals based on their behavior?

Extensions: Choose one or more

A. Acrostic Poem for Theodore

Review Theodore’s likes and dislikes and his needs.

Have the students create an acrostic poem about Theodore. An acrostic is a poem in which special letters spell a word. Have students write “Theodore” vertically. (Model this on the white board or chart paper.) Have students write a sentence about Theodore starting each sentence with the letter from his name. Have students write sentences based on Theodore’s likes, dislikes and needs. This activity can also be done as a class with younger students.

Tip: Make a sample before visiting the class.

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B. What does a guinea pig need?

Share with students information on guinea pig care from the sites below (or other sources). Emphasize that guinea pigs have special needs including: a clean cage every day; lots of company, human and otherwise; quiet; gentle handling. Consider bringing a stuffed guinea pig and modeling gentle handling. Have students recall what they learned about guinea pigs from listening to the poems.

<http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/exotics/guineapigs.pdf>

http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/rabbit_horse_and_other_pet_care/how_to_care_for_guinea_pigs.html

Have students fold an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper in half. Have students title the paper, "A guinea pig?" Have students list reasons why a guinea pig would be a good pet for themselves on one side. Have students list reasons why a guinea pig would not be a good pet for themselves on the other side. Share ideas and results.

C. Theodore's Story

Oh, Theodore! is a series of poems that tell a story. What is the story the poems tell? Review the book by sharing the illustrations with the students and reading the titles of the poems. Ask students to summarize what is happening in the story. First, write the main plot events on a white board or chart paper. Then, work with students to create a final summary of 35 words or less. Poem titles and possible summaries are included below for your reference.

Poem Titles	Pet Selection Name Danger Not Hungry Size Roommates	Morning Breakfast Noises Statue Conversation At Last	Theo-Door Magician Emergency Party Pooper A Guinea Pig Tale	Salary New Home Sliding Board Radio Program Cleaning Time	Spring Stroll Lucky Phone Call Come Back Search Lawn Mower Gone All Day	Oh, Theodore! Dinner Fur Piece Forever
Possible Summaries	The boy chooses, names, and starts to get to know a guinea pig. They sleep in the same room.	The boy observes Theodore and learns more about him. He talks to the guinea pig. Theodore lets the boy pet him and purrs.	The boy continues to observe Theodore and learn more about him. Theodore likes the refrigerator and vegetables. The ring of the phone scares him. He hides from the boy's friends.	The boy takes care of Theodore. They play and sit together.	When the phone rings Theodore gets scared. He disappears. The boy looks for him and is sad.	The boy finds Theodore! He is happy. The two will be friends forever!

Possible final summary: A boy adopts a guinea pig and names him Theodore. He spends time with Theodore, learns about him and make friends. When Theodore disappears the boy is sad. When Theodore returns he is happy.

Have students fold an 8½ x 11 piece of paper into four parts. Have students illustrate four scenes from Theodore’s story on the paper, or have them make up another lost pet story. Encourage students to write captions for their illustrations.

D. Pet Poems

Review some of the poem titles such as “Name,” “Roommates,” “Morning” and “Breakfast.” Ask students to think of a pet (any type of pet) they know or have seen. Ask students to write a poem about one aspect of that pet or that pet’s day. Some ideas: how a friend’s dog got her name; morning for a cat in an apartment; breakfast for a goldfish. If students do not want to write a poem, suggest they write a four sentence paragraph.

Tip: Write two or three of your own poems before doing this activity.

E. Guinea Pig Green Light (good for younger children)

Have students line up in one long line facing you. Make happy guinea pig sounds: cheeps, peeps and squeaks as the kids move toward you slowly. If kids move too quickly, make a squeal noise and have students freeze. First one to you gets to “pet” your arm.

Invite the students to pretend to be a guinea pig. Crouch down low with eyes wide to show they might be afraid of something. Wiggle their back end like Theodore did when he was excited in the story. Run around making “peeps” and “woootz” sounds like we heard in the story.

At the End of the Lesson

Ask students to reflect on the questions, “What did you learn from today’s book and discussion that you didn’t know before?” You can do this with the whole group, in a sharing circle or related class meeting format, by having students fill out index cards, or other formats as you choose. We recommend that you have a variety of formats. After getting a sense of what the students learned, reinforce key themes that they mentioned and add perhaps one or two that you would like them to keep in mind from the key concepts. Also discuss any follow up assignments or take home materials. Remember the students’ responses to the question, “What did you learn?” to add to your report about this reading.