

THE WORM FAMILY HAS ITS PICTURE TAKEN

Written by Jennifer Frank

Illustrated by David Ezra Stein

Reading and Discussion Activity Guide

Book Description:

Emma worm can't wait for her family to have its picture taken! But after seeing her friends' portraits she starts to worry. She can't smile for the camera like her friend Ellie the chipmunk because worms don't have teeth. She can't show off her poofy hair like her friend Abigail the cat because worms don't have hair. And she can't display her beautiful colors like her friend Olivia the butterfly because worms are only one color. What's a worm family to do? Can Emma find a way to make her very plain family look special?

Themes: Friendship, Diversity, Differences, Social-Emotional Learning

About the Author: Jennifer lives with her husband Sam and three daughters, Emma, Abby and Olivia in a suburb of Boston, MA. She wrote *The Worm Family Has Its Picture Taken* with the hope of inspiring her daughters to celebrate the beauty and differences in themselves and in others. Jennifer's family loves to vacation on Cape Cod, and each year they make sure to take a family portrait in front of the flowers in their back yard. This is her debut picture book.

About the Illustrator: Bestselling children's author and illustrator David Ezra Stein was born in Brooklyn, NY. David says, "I'll never forget the experience of sitting in a beloved lap and having a whole world open before me: a world brought to life by the pictures and the grown-up's voice. That wonder is what I want to re-create in my own books." David's *Interrupting Chicken* was awarded a Caldecott Honor. Scholastic named it one of the top 100 books of all time for children. He is the author/illustrator of 19 children's books. The latest (forthcoming 2021) are *The Worm Family has its Picture Taken*, (written by Jennifer Frank), and *Interrupting Chicken: Cookies for Breakfast*, the third *Interrupting Chicken* book. When he is not making books David loves cooking, opera singing, samba drumming, drawing from life, and running—though not all at the same time; That would just be silly. David lives with his wife, two children, and a rabbit named BunBun in Kew Gardens, NY.

Teaching Ideas and Resources:

Pre-Reading Discussion:

Predictions from the cover.

- **Observation:** Ask students what they see. What do they think about when they see the cover? What about the title? Who do they think is the main character in the book and why?
- **Prediction:** Can students predict what they think the book is going to be about based on the title and the cover? Why are the worms dressed up?
- **Prior Knowledge:** What do we know about worms already? Have you ever seen a dressed-up worm? We think that animals in the wild don't wear human clothes, but can

you think of examples of how animals' body coverings might seem like clothes (i.e. colorful feathers, fur that changes color with seasons, skin that camouflages with habitats)?

- **Connections:**

Personal: Ask students if they have ever dressed up before like this? When? Why? Has anyone taken their picture when they were dressed up? What was it like for them? Do they have pictures of themselves or their family members in their house? What do students know about the occasions for which people 'dress up'? Why do people dress up? Think about the phrase 'dress up'; dress means a thing (noun) but also it is a verb (getting dressed). Ask students what 'dressing up' means for their family (i.e. how families dress for particular occasions such as traditions, events or cultural practices.)

Science: What do you already know about worms? Do worms have eyes? What do they usually look like?

Textual: Does this remind you of any other stories you have read?

World: Ask students if they have seen, read or experienced a time when people beyond or outside their family have dressed up (i.e. for a cultural or religious practice).

Reading the Story:

- During the reading, point out to the students what Mrs. Worm uses as her "phone." Ask students if they have ever made a phone with a long tube and a funnel? Possible science tie-in to sound energy waves, how instruments make music and how voices project music/sounds that are clear or muffled given distance, face coverings etc.
- Once students have seen the chipmunk, ask students to predict what the cat is going to say makes her pictures special. Repeat for the butterfly.
- Ask kids if they can predict or have any ideas for how Emma could make their picture special. What ways would YOU make yourself special for the photo if you were Emma? What would your family do? Students can draw themselves and their families or draw Emma with their suggested ideas.
- Can also tie in science and what kids know about worms like where they live and their anatomy and what the author could have them do to make their picture special.
- What is the problem in the story? What is the rising action or steps leading toward Emma sharing the problem?
- How would you describe Emma's feelings? Have you ever had any feelings like this and if so, when?
- Why were the parents uncomfortable about wearing the costumes? Have you ever felt uncomfortable dressing up in fancy clothes?
- How did Mr. Muskrat help the worm family at the end of the story?

Lesson Plan Ideas

1) *Creative:* Choose your favorite line and illustrate it. Choose your favorite line and illustrate it. Why is this your favorite line? How does it connect back to the larger story?

2) *Theater Based:* Create a tableaux, or frozen picture.

- Provide students with different emotions to pose for. (Ex: How would you pose if you were going to look sad? Scared? Happy?)

- Provide students with specific lines from the story. (Ex: The worm family squiggled and wiggled into a delightful pose.”) In groups of 3-4, ask students to imagine what this looks like. Have them freeze in the pose.

3) *Sensory/Art Based:* Give students manipulatives (clay, etc) and have them create poses for the worm family as they imagined the final photo with Mr. Muskrat.

4) *Analytical:*

- Do Now: Ask kids to complete the attached handout. [See handout here](#)
 - Discussion: What line would you use to defend your word or drawing?
 - What message is the author sending to the reader about the way the Worm Family sees themselves?
 - What message can we learn about ourselves, as well?
- Draw a rectangle for a photo. Inside the photo put all the words the worm family would use to describe themselves. Outside the photo write the words other people would use to describe the worm family. (you can have kids do the same activity for themselves).
- Create a Found Poem on words from the text to answer a question about the theme or message. For example: Using only the words from the book, write a poem about how Emma feels at the end of the book.

Post Reading Discussion Questions:

- Link to story summary worksheet: [Complete the sentence to summarize the story: *Somebody...wanted..but ..so*](#)
- Ask students if they have any pictures hanging in their house of their family. When you think about the pictures hanging in your house, what do you remember about taking them? Did you take them for a special occasion or just for fun? When you look at your pictures what does it make you feel?
- Bring in your favorite photo that you have. Tell the story of what is happening in this picture.
- Story Sequencing (for special education or lower levels): What are the events in the story. Put them in order.

Focus on Social Emotional Learning:

- Look back at Emma worm’s changing facial and body expression and how it changes as she sees each of her friends.
- Ask students if they have ever been excited about something – and then once they shared it with a friend, they began to wonder if it was worth being excited about.
- What could Emma’s friends have done differently that may not have made Emma feel as bad.
- Ask students if they have ever felt different.

- Ask students to think of ways we can all celebrate other people's differences.

Art: Family Portrait Art Exercise:

Think about what makes your family special. Do you have special traditions? Draw a family portrait and at the bottom write something that you love about your family.

Literacy:

- Pre-K/K - Learn the alphabet using the worm family to trace the letters and numbers
- K/1 - Word Find - animals in the book and other words from the book

Resources for teachers:

Teaching Tolerance: <https://www.tolerance.org/learning-plan/understanding-differences>