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# SIMON'S BOOK

Author: Henrik Drescher

Publisher: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard

## THEME:

Lots of imagination and hard work can make a small idea grow and grow—even into a book.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Doodles come to “monstrous” life in this book, as Simon flees from a monster with the help of one of his drawing pens. LeVar takes viewers into the studio of the author/illustrator of *Simon's Book*, Henrik Drescher, to find out how he came up with the idea for his book and to look at the original illustrations. LeVar then visits a printing company to watch as a book is printed, pages are cut to size, and the book is bound.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Writing stories requires imagination. Discuss with students why imagination is important to a writer. What else requires a good imagination?

Discuss students' favorite books. What was their favorite book when they were really young? Why did they like it so much? What is a favorite book now and why? What kinds of stories do they like?

Pose these questions to students: If you could talk to an author, who would you most like to talk to and why? If you could ask that author one question, what would it be?

## CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Gather a collection of picture books (examples from **Reading Rainbow** are noted in parentheses) that show a variety of artistic styles, including the following: representational art (illustrations that are highly detailed and very realistic in appearance, e.g., *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, *Amazing Grace*, and *Rumpelstiltskin*); cartoon art (e.g., *Best Friends*, *Nosey Mrs. Rat*, and *Feelings*); folk art (tradition, motifs, and symbols of a folk culture are evident, e.g., *Gift of the Sacred Dog* and *Follow the Drinking Gourd*); naïve art (pictures that are simplistic in appearance and “flat” with regard to dimension, e.g., *Gila Monsters Meet You at the Airport* and *Tar Beach*); and expressionistic art (a type of abstract art that is an emotional response to what is real, e.g., *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin*, *Hail to Mail*, and *Always My Dad*). Discuss the different styles with the students. Ask them what they notice in the illustrations and what they like. How is the art alike or different from the art in *Simon's Book*?

Use this program as an opportunity to review all the parts of a book and their functions. Include the following in the discussion: the dust jacket (usually with a summary on the front flap and author/illustrator information on the back flap), the cover illustration (point out that some “open out” and reveal one large illustration that extends across both the front and back covers, while others have different illustrations on the front and back), the names of the author and illustrator, the end papers, the title page, the dedication, the copyright date, author's notes (if present), table of contents and index (in nonfiction books), and any characteristics unique to the book. Make a point of calling attention to the various parts of a book when you read aloud to the class. Encourage students to include some of these features when they make their own books.

Give each student a 4 x 6 unlined index card (or a piece of white construction paper the same size). Have the students use a colored marker (medium-wide tip) to make a simple doodle or squiggle on the paper and then exchange papers. They need to think what the doodle reminds them of and draw a picture “around” it. Display all the doodle pictures on a bulletin board.

Using tagboard or heavy construction paper, have students make bookmarks promoting their favorite book. Make sure they put their names on them and put them in a special box in the classroom library so others can use them as needed, or store them in the school library media center so they can enjoy wider use.

If possible, take a field trip to a publishing company or bindery so students can see some of the processes involved in printing a book. (Note to teachers: Some aspects of publishing children's picture books have changed since the making of this **Reading Rainbow** program. Color separations in the illustrations are typically done by computer rather than through the process shown in the program, and most picture books are now printed outside the United States because of the high cost of printing.)

The characters in *Simon's Book* came to life. Characters also come to life through dramatization. Have students work in small groups to choose a favorite book and act out a scene from it. Allow time for each group to share its dramatization with the whole class. Have the actors keep the title a secret until the end and see if the other students can guess the book before they tell.

Invite students to bring in a much-loved book from home and set up a display of favorite books. Save some time at the end of every day to visit this table. The child who brought the book might want to share some of it, or the teacher might read it to the class.

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Have the class make posters that promote reading and the enjoyment of books. Display these posters in the hallways or school library media center.

Have the students make books. Present them with some different ideas for book formats, such as the following: accordion fold books, pop-up books, shape books (the outline of the book is the shape of something), a book on a scroll, books with flaps that lift or open, or mix-and-match books (split pages fold down with unmatched pictures to create new illustrations). Students can also bind their story pages in hard covers made from cardboard covered with wallpaper scraps or contact paper. *Making Books* by Gillian Chapman and Pam Robson (Millbrook Press) offers *many* suggestions for bookmaking activities.

**RELATED THEMES:**

storytelling  
artistic styles and media

**RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:**

Program #12 — Three By The Sea  
Program #77 — Raccoons And Ripe Corn  
Program #84 — Rechenka's Eggs

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Henrik Drescher was born in Denmark, but moved to the New York area when he was a child. He attended art school for awhile and then traveled, keeping a notebook that he filled with icons and ideas. This notebook became his portfolio. Presently, he lives in Auckland, New Zealand, with his family, where he publishes hand-made books, paints, and illustrates books for children.

**BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**

BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING  
by Amy Schwartz (HarperCollins)

WHAT'S UNDER MY BED?  
by James Stevenson (Greenwillow)

ME AND NEESIE  
by Eloise Greenfield, illus. by Moneta Barnett (HarperCollins)

**SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

HOW A BOOK IS MADE  
by Aiki (Crowell)

BENJAMIN'S BOOK  
by Alan Baker (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)

WHAT DO AUTHORS DO?  
by Eileen Christelow (Clarion)

DORA'S BOOK  
by Michelle Edwards (Carolrhoda)

DREAM PEDDLER  
by Gail E. Haley (Dutton)

COLOR  
by Ruth Heller (Putnam & Grosset)

A BOOK TAKES ROOT: THE MAKING OF A PICTURE BOOK  
by Michael Kehoe (Carolrhoda)

BREAKING INTO PRINT  
by Stephen Krensky, illus. by Bonnie Christensen (Little, Brown)

AUTHOR: A TRUE STORY  
by Helen Lester (Houghton Mifflin)

THE SQUIGGLE  
by Carole Lexa Schaefer, illus. by Pierr Morgan (Crown)

FROM PICTURES TO WORDS  
by Janet Stevens (Holiday House)

CHERRIES AND CHERRY PITS  
by Vera B. Williams (Greenwillow)

The word "NOTES" is written in a large, stylized, handwritten font. The letters are interconnected and have a rough, sketchy quality. To the right of the word is a long, horizontal, wavy flourish that extends across the width of the word.

Simon Tofield has produced a series of critically acclaimed graphic humour books. His books are available in over 27 countries worldwide. Click the book cover to order in the UK, or, click country flag at the bottom of the page to find books available in your country! New book! It's a dog's life! While patrolling his territory, Simon's Cat dips into the lives of the many dogs in his neighbourhood, including crazy poodles, a lovestruck bulldog and a pack of mischievous puppies.