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# The Monster Who Lost His Mean

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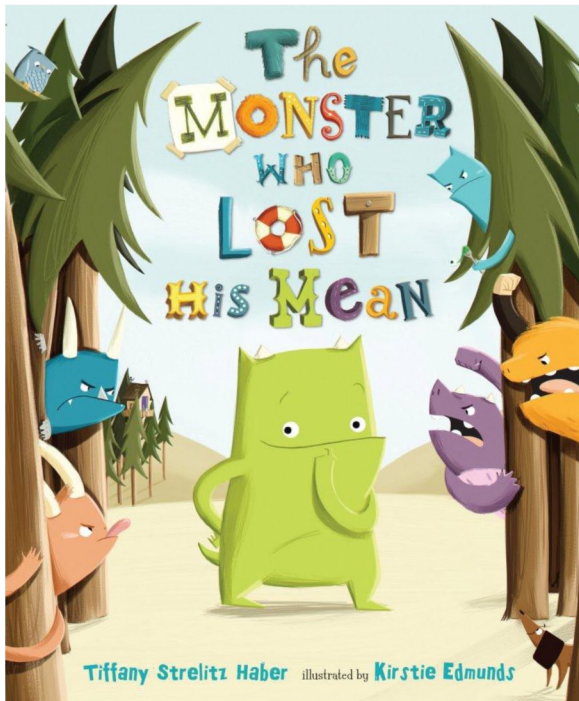
a teacher's guide

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Created by marcie colleen

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Sunday Book Review  
Bookself: Monsters



By Tiffany Strelitz Haber, illustrated by Kirstie Edmunds

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She is the author of *The Monster Who Lost His Mean* (Henry Holt, 2012), and the forthcoming *Ollie and Claire* (Philomel, 2013)

Learn more about Tiffany at [www.itsrhymetime.com](http://www.itsrhymetime.com).



## **Kirstie Edmunds**

### **Illustrator, *The Monster Who Lost His Mean***



Kirstie lives near the woods, with her husband Jonathan, and their two tomato plants, Tom and Frank. She was born in Wales, the land of the red dragon, and moved to London to go to art school. Though she's never seen a monster, Kirstie loves to paint them.

Visit Kirstie's blog at <http://pencilpocket.blogspot.com>.

## **Marcie Colleen**

### **Curriculum Writer, *The Monster Who Lost His Mean***

Marcie is a former teacher with a Bachelor's degree in English Education from Oswego State and a Masters degree in Educational Theater from NYU. She lives in Brooklyn, NYC and is pursuing the Picture Book writer's dream to publication. She likes to think that the 'M' in her name stands for mischievous and hopes she NEVER loses it!

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## **How To Use This Guide**

This classroom guide for *The Monster Who Lost His Mean* is designed for students in preschool through third grade. Teachers are free to pick and choose activities based on their own classroom's needs and abilities.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *The Monster Who Lost His Mean* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant New Jersey content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama and the National Common Core.

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## Reading Comprehension

Before you read or listen to *The Monster Who Lost His Mean*, look at the cover.

- What do you think the book will be about? Why do you think so?
- How does the main character feel?  
How do the other characters feel about him?

Look at a few of the illustrations.

- Where does this story take place?  
Can you find clues in the picture?  
What is the name of the place?  
What is it like to live there? What are the houses like?



Now read or listen to the book.

- Who is the main character(s)? Why do you think so?
- Who are some of the other characters?
- What is the main problem?
- How does Onster try to solve his problem? Where does he look for his 'M'?
- What happens when he can't find his 'M'? What are some things he does without his 'mean'?
- How do the other monsters react? How do the kids react?
- What happens at the end of the story? Does anyone learn a lesson?

Let's talk about the people who made *The Monster Who Lost His Mean*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Take a look at the illustrations in the following spreads:

The "What a Monster is" spread

- What is happening in each box? What does it tell us about monsters in general?

The "search for the M" spread.

- Where are some of the places Onster searches?
- Where do you look for something when its lost?

The "sitting on the heap" spread.

- What are some details that the illustrator added to tell the story?
- What are some of Onster's belongings? What can you learn about him from this heap?

As a class, read *Ferdinand the Bull* by Munro Leaf, illustrated by Robert Lawson.

- How is Ferdinand similar to Onster?
- How are they different?
- What do you think it would be like if Onster and Ferdinand met? What would they do together? Write a little story about them.

(Another great book to read is *Mostly Monsterly* by Tammi Sauer, illustrated by Scott Magoon. Read this book to the class and discuss how Bernadette's situation is similar to Onster's.)

## Rhyme Time

*The Monster Who Lost His Mean* is written in rhyme. Here are some activities to help introduce rhyming to your class.

### **Engine and Caboose**

Introduce the concept of producing rhyming words with train engines and caboose pictures or objects. Explain that when you make rhyming words, the caboose will always stay the same but the engines will be different. Pick a sound for the caboose (e.g., "at") and place many different engines in front to make rhyming words (e.g., h-, m-, c-).

### **"I Spy"**

Start the activity by sitting with the children in a large circle. Provide the children with a sentence containing two rhyming words, e.g. "I spy a chair and a bear." The first object name is something in the room and the second object name doesn't have to be visible in the room. Have the child on your right create her own "I Spy" sentence. You may want to place objects around the room that are easy to rhyme so you can point them out to the children if they need suggestions.

### **Fill in the Blank**

Re-read *The Monster Who Lost His Mean* aloud. When you get to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> sentence of each stanza, pause and have the children raise their hands and give the correct rhyming word to complete the sentence.

For example:



*"Monsters are a spooky bunch--*

*a scary, hairy group.*

*They run in packs,*

*Leave giant \_\_\_\_\_,*

*And all dine on eyeball soup.*

Offer opportunities for the children to make up silly sentences using other words that rhyme but don't make sense. Continue with the rest of the book until all the children have had opportunities to rhyme.

This can be done with other rhyming books, as well.

## **Willaby Wallby song**

In this name game/song, the class sings and uses the students' names to complete the rhyme:

*Willaby, Wallaby we,*

*An elephant sat on me.*

*Willaby, Wallaby wu,*

*An elephant sat on you.*

*Willaby, Wallaby Wusan,*

*An elephant sat on Susan.*

*Willaby, Wallaby Wark,*

*An elephant sat on Mark.*

Once the children catch on to the song, they should sing it for everyone in the class.

## **Adjectives and Acronyms**

*Mean, Observant, Noisy, Super Strong, and Tough-to-please,*

*Envious, Remarkable, A monster's all of these!*

### **The Adjective Box**

This is an excellent activity to teach that adjectives are describing words.

Decorate an empty shoe box and cut a hole in one of the ends.

*You can attach a sock (with the toes cut off) to the hole on the end to make it easy to guide little hands in and out of the box. Attach one end of the sock around the hole and the rest of the sock serves as a tube into the box.*

Place various items in the box (ie. A Lego, pinecone, play-doh, feather, etc.) These should be very tactile items. The kids will not be able to see inside the box, but only feel around.

Although they might be able to identify the object, the game is to DESCRIBE the item using adjectives. (ie. Hard, soft, squishy, bumpy, etc)

Each child should have a chance to reach inside the box. See how many adjectives the class can come up with and create a list.



## **"My Name" Acronyms**

Take a look at the "What a Monster is" spread in *The Monster Who Lost His Mean*. What does each letter stand for in "Monster"? Describe what each adjective means.

Have the students create acronyms from their own names. The students should come up with an adjective for each letter in their names. They can have fun coming up with the adjectives that they think best describe them.

For an added art activity, have students create a poster with their name on it and all of the adjectives that make up their acronyms. Additionally, they can create a collage of their adjectives and pictures that represent those words.

## **Create Your Own "Onster" story**

Once everyone has created an acronym out of their name, write a story in which they lose their first letter. For example, if the B in Billy stands for Brave, then the story would be The Billy Who Lost His Brave. Billy would write a story about when he got scared because he was no longer Brave.

If the students are too young to write the story by themselves, then either create a Fill in the Blank version they can do at home with assistance or write them as a class. Perhaps ask one child or two to volunteer their name.



## **Celebrate "Onster Day"!**

Pick a day to be "Onster Day" in the class and for the whole day call everyone by their "Onster" name (eliminating the first letter of their name). Have kids bring in tasty treats to share or play games, calling everything by eliminating the first letter of the word. Maybe (S)Usie would share her favorite (c)ookies with the class.

## **Onomatopoeia**

*BOOM BOOM! CRUNCH CRUNCH! The Onster sits alone for lunch.*

*BOO HOO! SIGH SIGH. The Onster's sad and starts to cry.*

Onomatopoeia is an imitation of a sound in words. Some examples from *The Monster Who Lost His Mean* are boom, crunch, and pow. The book *Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?* by Dr. Seuss is another excellent way to introduce onomatopoeia to your students.

Discuss why someone might choose to use onomatopoeia in place of regular words in a story. Does the onomatopoeia do anything to bring the story to life?

## **Zip! Zap! Boing! Game**

The class starts in circle, one of the players points to another player to one side of them and says 'zip'. That player turns to the next player in the circle, points to them and says 'zip'. Thus the 'zip' is passed around the circle in one direction. At any time any player can say 'zap' to the person pointing at them.

When they do the player that says 'zip' must change the direction of the pointing. This means that they must react quickly by passing the zip to the person that just pointed at them. Now the 'zip' is passed around the circle, changing direction every time there is a 'zap' and vice versa. Lastly the person that receives the 'zip' or 'zap' may elect to yell 'boing' and point at someone anywhere in the circle. That player then restarts the 'zip' going in the direction of their choice. The group must really pay attention for this to work.

(Once kids have gotten the hang of this game, it could be fun to make up other elements using onomatopoeia.)

## **Math**

**Word Problems** *For younger students, the use of pictures or props might be needed to figure out word problems.*

- 1) Onster searches 5 garbage cans for his "M". He then finds 2 more garbage cans to look in. How many garbage cans does Onster search?
- 2) There are 4 rosebushes in Mrs. Power's yard. Onster waters them and 2 more grow. How many rosebushes are in Mrs. Power's yard?
- 3) There were 7 monsters sitting at the lunch table. Onster (1) leaves. How many monsters are left at the lunch table?
- 4) Onster cooks 10 strips of bacon for the Lander clan's brunch. Lilly Lander feeds 3 pieces to the dog. How many strips of bacon are left?

## **The Secret Message Code game**

*Although this activity is in the Math section of this guide, it definitely has cross-over with ELA as it teaches letter recognition, spelling and reading depending on the level of the students.*

Assign a number to each letter in the alphabet (ie. A=1, B=2, C=3, and so on).

Create a secret message.

- It can be a place where Onster's "M" is hiding (and the teacher can actually hide the letter "M" in that place. Ie. Under the Teacher's Desk)
- Or it can be a message that serves as a lesson "Always Be Yourself".

Create the message, only using a blank to represent each letter. Under each blank, place a math equation that would lead to the necessary letter.

For example  $1+3$  under a blank means that that blank should contain a D, because  $D=4$ .

Do this with the entire message and have students try and figure out the Secret Message.

Depending on the level of the students, this activity can be done as a class or individually. Perhaps the first student to complete the code wins a prize.

## Science

### **"No Two the Same" Nature Walk**

*Onster feels ashamed because he is no longer EXACTLY like all of the other monsters. But we know that in nature, no two things are ever exactly alike. It is the variation that makes the world beautiful.*

Take a walk through a park or the school grounds. Students should each be given a small bag to collect items they find (ie. Pebbles, leaves, sticks, pieces of bark, flowers, pinecones, etc).

The object is to collect TWO of every item and then, perhaps with a magnifying glass, study them closely. How are these items the same? How are they different? All five senses (except taste) can be used to inspect the two items. Do they feel EXACTLY the same way? Smell? Look?



### **Stick People craft**

Students should gather leaves and sticks while either on a nature walk, or while playing on the playground.

Leaves can then be sorted by size.

The kids should choose one bigger leaf and 4 smaller leaves. These make the head, hands and feet.

Glue sticks on a piece of construction paper to make a person's body. Glue the leaves on for the head, hands and feet.

Display the Stick People on a bulletin board with the heading "No Two People are Exactly Alike" or "Differences Make the World Beautiful!"

**Bake, Bake! An Onster Cake!** ([http://www.education.com/activity/article/Bake\\_Cake\\_fifth/](http://www.education.com/activity/article/Bake_Cake_fifth/))

*"I'm nothing since I lost my Mean!" he sobs into his stew. 'I've got to find that M, or else it's bye-bye, monster crew!'"*

Onster feels that losing his "m" changes him completely. Here is a fun experiment to see what happens when you eliminate one ingredient when baking a cake.

*Although this is a more advanced lesson, it can be fun for kids and can be adapted according to their level and the resources available.*

A few things can happen when you bake a cake. Some chemical reactions to keep in mind while doing this tasty experiment are:

- 1.Heat helps baking powder produce tiny bubbles of gas, which makes the cake light and fluffy.
- 2.Heat causes protein from the egg to change and make the cake firm.
- 3.Oil keeps the heat from drying out the cake.

What You Need:

- small bowl
- several sheets of aluminum foil
- pie pan
- cooking oil
- measuring spoons
- cup or mug
- index card
- pencil
- science journal (optional)

### Ingredients for one cake:

You'll need to measure and mix this set of ingredients four times to complete all four experiments—with the exceptions that are given below.

- 6 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 pinch of salt
- 2 or 3 pinches of baking powder
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- butter knife
- 1/3 of an egg (Break egg into a cup; beat until mixed, then use approx. 1/3 of it. Save the rest for 2 of the other cakes.)



### What You Do:

- 1.Wrap several sheets of aluminum foil around the outside of the small bowl to form a mold.
- 2.Remove your foil "pan" and put it in the pie pan for support.
- 3.Coat the inside of the foil "pan" with the cooking oil, or cooking spray so the cake doesn't stick.
- 4.Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.
- 5.Mix all of the dry ingredients together.
- 6.Now, add the wet ingredients (as stated in the ingredient list, only use 1/3 of the egg; save the rest for use with the other cakes, below).
- 7.Stir the wet and dry ingredients until smooth and all the same color.
- 8.Pour batter into the "pan."
- 9.Bake in oven for 15 minutes.

After 15 minutes, remove the cake from the oven, set aside, and let cool for tasting later (yum). 10. Label the first cake #1 on an index card. Make sure to label each cake with its number to separate differences when all they are all baked. Next, continue on to make three more cakes, but do the following:

- Leave the oil out of one. Label the cake "#2 NO OIL"
- Leave the egg out of another. Label the cake "#3 NO EGG"
- Leave the baking powder out of the third. Label the cake "#4 NO BAKING POWDER"

11. After baking, cut each cake in half and look inside.

- Do the cakes look different from each other?
- Do they taste different from each other?
- What did the chemical change and use of heat do to cakes # 1-4?

12. Discuss all of the reactions that occurred with cakes #1-4. Write about, or draw pictures of what was observed in a science journal.

## Social Studies

### **Famous People Who Didn't "Fit In"**

One of the reasons that Onster feels so badly about losing his "m" is that he no longer "fits in" with the other monsters of Monsterwood. In fact, the other monsters tease him because he is not like them. This hurts Onster and makes him ashamed of who he has become. It is not until he meets the children who like him for who he is that Onster realizes that living without his "m" is ok.

Many children in school are bullied every day because they are "not like everyone else." Sometimes, just knowing they are not alone can help.

Research famous and notable people who were bullied for being different. A wonderful resource is <http://www.onlinecolleges.net/2011/11/02/15-famous-successful-people-bullied-school/>.

Share these stories with your students. Possible activities can be:

- Ask each student to research a particular celebrity who was bullied and share their story.
- Have students talk to older family members who have been bullied and share their stories.

- Rewrite history ~ discuss how the students could have treated the celebrity different.

## **Bullying**

*Onster is being bullied by the other monsters in Monsterwood.*

*Below is some information on bullies, along with some discussion questions and an activity.*

### Types of Bullying

- Physical bullying:
  - Hitting, kicking, or pushing someone...or even just threatening to do it
  - Stealing, hiding, or ruining someone's things
  - Making someone do things he or she doesn't want to do
- Verbal bullying:
  - Name-calling
  - Teasing, taunting
  - Insulting or otherwise verbally abusing someone
- Relationship bullying:
  - Refusing to talk to someone
  - Excluding someone from groups or activities
  - Spreading lies or rumors about someone
  - Making someone do things he or she doesn't want to do

## What to do if You are Bullied?

- Look at the kid bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice. Say "I don't like that."
- If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away. Don't fight back. Find an adult to stop the bullying on the spot.

There are things you can do to stay safe in the future, too.

- Talk to an adult you trust. Don't keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone. They can help you make a plan to stop the bullying.
- Stay away from places where bullying happens.
- Stay near adults and other kids. Most bullying happens when adults aren't around.



[www.itsrhymetime.com](http://www.itsrhymetime.com)

### **Host a "M-Less Day" Surprise Party!**

The children throw a Surprise Party for Onster at the end of *The Monster Who Lost His Mean*. Host a similar party in your classroom.

- Discuss why the children throw a party for Onster and how it makes him feel.
- List some ways the children in your class can observe "M-Less Day!" What are some things they can do to eliminate "mean"?
- Have some token prizes for anyone who is seen being inclusive or kind to other students.



## "Dine on Eyeball Soup" Recipe

*Of course, any "M-Less" party needs a very special treat! Your students will love embracing their inner monster while they eat this spooky dish.*

*If you can, have students prepare this soup together. There is nothing better for learning cooperation than cooking!*

Prep time: 15 minutes

Serves: 4

1 lb. frozen strawberries (thawed)

¼ cup and 2 Tablespoons sugar

½ cup pure, unsweetened cranberry juice\*

¼ teaspoon almond extract

Assorted melons (several different colors are best)

20 blueberries

10 red peeled grapes

Process the strawberries, sugar, cranberry juice, and almond extract in the blender until smooth.

To make the eyeballs, using a large melon baller or rounded tablespoon measure, scoop out large eyeballs from the different colored melons. Leave one side slightly flat. Cut the sides from the blueberries to make the pupils.

Pour cold soup into large, flat bowls. Place the melon eyeball and the peeled grape eyeballs into the soup so that they are sticking out of the soup. Place a blueberry sides on each melon "eyeball."

If only sweetened cranberry juice is available, reduce or remove the sugar from the recipe.

Read more: <http://www.newsnet5.com/dpp/lifestyle/food/lets-dish-host-chris-koetke-shows-us-how-to-make-halloween-eyeball-soup#ixzz2Calnzbyu>

