1973

Writing and Illustrating Children's Literature

Mark Richard Serdjenian
Colby College

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Writing and Illustrating Children's Literature/

by

Mark Richard Serdjenian

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Senior Scholars Program

Colby College

1973
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Miss Murphy's fifth grade students at Pleasant Street School enjoyed working on science projects which dealt with their favorite animals. It was suggested that the students bring in live animals, but after checking with the principal's office Miss Murphy explained that this was against the rules. The rest of the afternoon was uneventful, except that the teacher announced that she would not be in school the next day.

After school, the students plotted to sneak in their pets the next day and trick the substitute teacher. Everything went smoothly, and each child told the class about his pet. The animals were all unusual creatures, including a Tasmanian devil, a bongo, and sixteen others. The elderly substitute fell for the students' plan, suspecting nothing.

When school ended that Friday afternoon, the students ran off in such a hurry that five animals were left behind for the weekend. These pets proceeded to tear every classroom apart. On Monday morning the principal decided to teach the fifth-graders a painful lesson. He called off school for the day except for those in Miss Murphy's class. Their punishment was to spend the whole day cleaning the mess which their pets had made.
FOREWORD

The Senior Scholars Program has given me great opportunity for research and experimentation in the area of writing and illustrating children's literature. I began the year by doing some much needed background reading which dealt with theories and criticisms of writing for children. The books which I read are as follows:


Reading these books helped me to strengthen and reorganize my own ideas regarding children's literature. These ideas
were explained in a brief (five page) paper which was submitted to Mr. Arnold. In summary:

1) Children's literature is indeed literature to be taken seriously;

2) Text and illustrations together lend unity and character to a children's book, and both are crucial to the story's success;

3) The pictures should have a lively, sensitive quality to them;

4) A combination of the familiar and the novel is desirable;

5) A book of knowledge should contain the essential truth of the subject matter, though simplified;

6) In teaching a moral lesson, it is important to demonstrate the moral, not to state it in words.

Following this background work, I began writing *What the Devil is That?*, a story for and about a fifth grade class here in Waterville. Working in close contact with children helped me to establish a grade level for the story (use of proper vocabulary and syntax, ensuring that the students can understand the ideas presented). The story I have written is totally in keeping with my theories (as listed above) of what a children's story should strive to accomplish. The pictures help to tell the story, and this I feel is very important for young readers. The fusion of text and illustrations creates an adventure into which the child can enter. Also, my story
deals with a familiar setting (the elementary school); but in the school extraordinary things take place. In this way the child can at once relate to the world of the book and be transported out of his own limited environment. In addition, the young reader of my story learns both zoological and moral lessons.

Though the story is fictitious, it includes many scientifically accurate facts concerning nearly twenty unusual wild animals. Writing the story necessarily entailed considerable research for the scientific aspect involved. The books which I read thoroughly for this part of the project are:


Having finished the writing of the story before January Program began, that month was spent illustrating and producing the final copy. That done, second semester has been devoted to writing and directing a dramatic version of *What the Devil is That?* The play will be performed at Pleasant Street School
on Wednesday, May 16 at seven o'clock. To this end, after writing the play, I have spent the remainder of the semester helping the fifth graders make papier-mâché replicas of their animals, working at rehearsals, and assisting with props and invitations for the public performance.
What the Devil is That?

by
Mark Serdjenian
All of the students in Miss Murphy's fifth grade class at Pleasant Street School loved animals. So when it came time to study birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals in science, the whole class became excited. The students went about their work eagerly, each one trying to make his or her report on a special animal the best in the class. One Thursday afternoon, while the class was working on these science projects, a little girl raised her hand to ask the teacher a question.

"Miss Murphy," said Rhonda, "wouldn't it be good if we all brought in live animals to go along with our reports? That way we could see what the animals really look like instead of just seeing them in pictures."

"Well Rhonda," replied Miss Murphy after thinking it over, "that is a very good idea, but there is one problem. There is a rule against bringing animals into school, so you'll have to go ask Mr. Gray if he will make an exception for our class."

"OK," said Rhonda as she headed for the principal's office, "I'll go check with Mr. Gray."

While Rhonda was gone, the classroom was almost completely silent. Here and there a few whispers could be heard, those coming from students trying to predict Mr. Gray's decision. They could hardly wait for Rhonda to return with the answer, and everyone, including Miss Murphy, impatiently awaited her arrival.
After ten or fifteen minutes, the door to Room 11 slowly opened, and in walked Rhonda. Right away, everyone could tell by the disappointed look on her face what Mr. Gray’s decision had been.

After awhile, Miss Murphy said: “I know you’re all unhappy, and so am I. But this rule was made to protect the school building from damage and to keep the people in it from getting hurt. Mr. Gray is right; we have to go by the rules, so let’s try to get back to work now.”

For the rest of the afternoon the class slowly settled back to work, but everyone was sad that they could not bring their animals into school. Many of the students had unusual pets at home, and would have liked a chance to show them to their classmates. At the end of the school day, Miss Murphy made an announcement in a very soft voice:

“As you must have noticed by now, I’m starting to lose my voice again and I don’t feel very well at all. I’m afraid I probably will not be in school tomorrow, so please be polite to the substitute teacher. I have put all your work for tomorrow on the board, so you will have plenty to do.”

After school was dismissed for the day, most of the kids went out to play soccer in the schoolyard for awhile. When the game was over, the players broke up into little groups and started to walk home, talking all the while about the action of the game just ended. All of a sudden,
Joni came running up to some of the children who were walking together. In the group were Rhonda, Danny, Anna, Todd, Heidi, and Damian. And they could tell that Joni was excited about something.

“What an idea I’ve got!” she shouted. “It’s great!” Then she stood there trying to catch her breath as the others waited.

“Well, what is it?” they all asked at once.

Finally, Joni began to explain her idea to the other students:

“We know Miss Murphy’s going to be out of school, so why don’t we bring in our pets tomorrow? We’ll bring them up this side stairway so Mr. Gray won’t see them, then we can share our favorite animals with each other. Not bad, huh?”
“I don’t know,” answered Todd. If we got caught, we’d really be in trouble. Mr. Gray and Miss Murphy both said we couldn’t do it. And what about the substitute teacher?”

“Oh, I bet we’ll get Mrs. Green,” said Danny. “And we could just tell her that Mr. Gray said it was all right. She’d never know the difference. Besides, we’ll never get caught; we’re too clever.”

Everyone else in the group liked the idea, and finally even Todd agreed to the plan. Each one took the names of a few others in the class to telephone that night, so that everyone would be told to bring in their animals the next day. Even students without animals were to arrive at school early and help sneak the pets into the classroom before the first bell rang. Everything was carefully planned, including all the excuses that the children would need to trick the substitute into believing them. There was no way that the plan could fail.
Early the next morning, everything went smoothly. Everyone was there to help get the animals up the stairs and into Room 11. It was a dark, chilly, spring morning, and some of the animals were not used to the cold weather. So even Bob and Dave, the janitors at Pleasant Street School, helped the students quickly move some of the larger pets inside. Mr. Gray was busy in his office before school, and he had no idea that so many animals were being rushed upstairs.

By the time the first bell rang on that Friday morning, all the students in Miss Murphy's class were quietly in their seats. Then, in walked Mrs. Green! The whole class breathed a sigh of relief, greeting the substitute teacher with a cheerful “Good Morning”. Mrs. Green, who was almost always in a good mood, responded with an equally pleasant “Good Morning”.
Quietly, the students congratulated each other on how smoothly everything had gone, winking, nodding, and smiling at one another. Every child in the classroom beamed with pride at their success. But then Mrs. Green began to sniff around the room.

“What is that peculiar odor?” she asked, continuing to smell her way about.

“Oh, that’s just from some of the little pets that we have in the room,” said Loretta quickly. “This week in science we’re learning about how animals smell. See, science projects are listed on the board as part of our afternoon work.”

And so they were. But by now the students were getting a little nervous, and they began to look worriedly at each other. It was still dark in the room, and Mrs. Green, who was quite old, did not see too well. So she turned to Randy and asked him to turn on the lights. Hesitating for a moment, Randy walked over to the switch and flicked on the lights. When Mrs. Green looked around the room, she could hardly believe her eyes, for animals of every size, shape, and description filled the room.

“My goodness, you children certainly have brought in some interesting pets,” remarked the substitute. “But what in the world is that huge turtle doing in here?”
“That’s not a turtle,” said Arthur. “That’s my pet giant tortoise. He weighs six hundred pounds and comes from the Galapagos Islands—they’re near South America. Big, huh?”

“Yes, he certainly is quite large,” replied Mrs. Green. “How did you get him?”

“My great-grandfather was the captain of a ship. He caught him about one hundred years ago on a sea voyage, explained Arthur. “Tortoises live longer than any other animal—up to one hundred fifty years old; so I’ll have him for a while. Tortoises live on land, so I don’t have to keep him in water like I would a turtle.”

“That’s very interesting Arthur; thank you,” said Mrs. Green. “Oh my,” she said upon spotting the next animal, “whose cat is that?”
“That's my leopard,” answered Heidi, “she came from Africa. Isn't she beautiful?”

“If it's your pet, why do you have to keep it in a cage?” Linda wondered.

“That's because the leopard is the most feared of all the cats, and I couldn't let her out with all these other animals here. Even though she's only seven feet long, she's just as dangerous as Dorothy's tiger. Ask her,” suggested Heidi.

“Is that true, Dorothy?” Linda asked.
“Heidi’s right,” Dorothy told her. “Tigers are the biggest cats in Asia, but leopards are very dangerous too. So we have to keep them both in cages, especially since they’re full-grown now.”

“Boy, my leopard sure would like a taste of Brian’s bongo,” said Heidi.

“What is a bongo?” asked Mrs. Green, amazed at the variety of animals brought into the classroom.
"This is a bongo," said Brian displaying his pet. "Bongos are a kind of antelope, and they live in the thick forests of Africa. They're very fast and have excellent hearing, so it's hard to catch them."

"My goodness; so far I've seen a giant tortoise, a leopard, a tiger, and a bongo," noted Mrs. Green. "What could possibly be next?"
"How about something a little smaller?" said Tommy, holding up his mudpuppy for all to see.

"What are those ugly red things on his head?" asked Stephen.

"Those are his gills," replied Tommy. "The mudpuppy is a salamander that lives in the rivers and lakes of the United States, so it needs a way to breathe underwater, like a fish. Most salamanders live on land and don't grow as big as mudpuppies. Mine is a foot long, and most other salamanders are only about half that length."

When Tommy had finished talking about his pet, Mrs. Green turned her attention to the snarling noise going on behind her.

"What the devil is that?" she asked Debbie and Rhonda, who were trying to calm down the fierce creature.
“This is our Tasmanian devil,” said Debbie, “she’s not too friendly sometimes. That’s why they are called devils. They’re only two and a half feet long, but they are so strong that they can kill animals as big as sheep. So don’t stick your fingers in her cage.”

“The Tasmanian devil has a pouch like a kangaroo,” added Rhonda. “That’s where the babies live when they are born. They come from Tasmania, an island south of Australia.”

“My, my,” said Mrs. Green shaking her head, “this certainly is fascinating. What have we here?”
“That’s another ferocious fighter,” said Scott, “a wolverine; and he is found in North America, Europe, and Asia. The wolverine is the strongest mammal in the world for its size—it will attack any animal, even a bear. And it’s only two to two and a half feet long.”

“We do have some fearless animals in the room today,” concluded Mrs. Green, “with a Tasmanian devil and a wolverine here together. For a change of pace though, I would like to see something a bit more gentle if possible.”
“I’ve got a friendly little pet here,” said Diane, leading her raccoon to where Mrs. Green stood.

“Yes, I have heard that raccoons make lovely pets,” said Mrs. Green. “Did you find yours around here?”

“Yes,” replied Diane, “raccoons live all over the United States. They are excellent tree climbers and swimmers. You’ve probably heard that raccoons wash their food before eating—they do that to clean and soften the food. And they eat almost anything in sight!”
“Here’s another gentle animal,” said Tracy when Diane had finished, “my giant panda.”

“You call a bear gentle?” asked Stephen, laughing.

“Even though he looks like a five foot teddy bear, the giant panda is not a bear at all. It’s a relative of the raccoon, and it lives in China and Tibet. The giant panda’s meal is almost always the same—tender bamboo shoots. What a clown, he’s always fooling around,” Tracy told her classmates.

“Well, if the panda isn’t a bear, that fat, furry little gray thing on Carroll’s head must be a bear,” Michael remarked confidently.
"He does look like one, but he's not a bear either," corrected Carroll. "This is a koala. Koalas are pouched animals, like the Tasmanian devil we saw, and are related to the kangaroo. They live in Australia, eating the leaves and bark of the gum trees that they live in."

"How long is the baby carried around in the pouch?" asked an amazed Michael.

"For about six months, then it rides on its mother's back for a year after that," Carroll informed him.

Suddenly, the attention of the whole class turned to the splashing sound coming from the back of the room, where Anna had set up her swimming pool.
"That's my little alligator," explained Anna calmly, "she's only a five foot baby. Alligators grow twice as big as that. They live around Florida in the United States, and in some rivers in China."

"What's the difference between an alligator and a crocodile?" Randy wondered.

Anna was ready with the answer: "Alligators live in fresh water, and crocodiles live in salt water most of the time. Also, crocodiles have more pointed snouts than alligators. They belong to the same family though."

Right next to Anna's alligator, something splashed about in another pool of water.

"What's in there?" asked the curious Mrs. Green.
“My pet penguin,” answered Todd, “he came from Antarctica.”

“He sure has stumpy little wings,” Susan said. “Can he fly?”

“No,” said Todd, “penguins are one of a few birds that can’t fly at all. But they’re good swimmers. That’s how they catch the fish that they eat, by swimming. They’re really friendly, and intelligent too.”

Just then Kim walked in with a bucket of fish. “Oh, those must be for Todd’s penguin,” said Sandra.
"Well, some of them are," replied Kim, "but most of these fish are for my sea lion."

"That looks like a seal to me. Is there any difference between them?" asked Gerry.

"The big difference," said Kim, "is that sea lions have ears on the outside of their heads, and seals don't. Otherwise, the two animals are very much alike. Both are found in nearly every ocean in the world. The animals that are called 'trained seals' in circus shows are usually sea lions. So there is a lot of confusion between seals and sea lions."
“There’s not much confusion about my pet,” said Joni. “A great anteater is a great anteater. They come from Central and South America. Mine is eight feet long, and that’s about as big as they grow. Anteaters are sometimes called ant bears, but they aren’t bears at all.”

“With such a small mouth, how do anteaters eat?” asked Sandra as she pointed to Joni’s pet.

“They don’t have any trouble because their tongues are up to two feet long,” Joni explained. “So after it rips open a nest with its claws, the anteater can scoop up termites and ants with its long, sticky tongue.”

“Here’s a pretty little animal,” said Mrs. Green as she almost stepped on the furry creature, “but it does have a rather unpleasant odor.”
“That’s because she’s scared,” said Janet. “She’s a mink, and when threatened minks give off an odor like a skunk’s, but they can’t spray it as far. The mink is a member of the weasel family, and it lives along streams in North America and Europe. They are raised on farms for their valuable and attractive fur.”

Some of the students thought that the pet show was over, but the noises coming from above told them there was more to come. Two lively animals were overhead swinging from light to light, having a great time.

“Get those monkeys down here boys so that we can see them more clearly,” said Mrs. Green.
“They’re not really monkeys,” said Danny. “My pet is a chimpanzee and Damian’s is an orangutan. Both are known as great apes.”

“Chimpanzees come from the jungles of Africa,” added Damian, “and orangutans live on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. There really aren’t many differences between the two, except I have to admit that chimpanzees are smarter than orangutans.”

“Both are very clever,” said Danny. “But the chimpanzee, which is reddish in color, is probably the most intelligent of all the animals next to man.”

“Well, that seems to be the last of the pets in the room,” began Mrs. Green, “and I must say that...”
But Mrs. Green never did finish that sentence, because she fainted before she could say how glad she was that no snakes had been brought in. The reason for her fainting was fourteen feet of boa constrictor, which now dangled inches from where her head had been just moments before. Quickly, Paul captured his snake and returned it to its cage.

“What should we do?” several students wondered aloud. “We can’t just leave Mrs. Green lying here. Suggestions were shouted from all corners of the room: “Slap her” “Kiss her” “Throw water in her face.” Luckily, though, Mrs. Green came to without any help from the class.
After she returned from having a drink of water, Mrs. Green spoke to the class: “I do feel much better now,” she began, “for a moment there I thought I was on an African safari when I first looked around. But I do think that we should get to work for the remainder of the afternoon.”

For the rest of the school day, everything was quiet in Room 11. Most of the animals slept away the time, while the students did the math, spelling, reading, and language that they should have done all day. Mrs. Green recovered from her fainting spell, and the afternoon went by without any more trouble. The children were still so busy when the bell rang at 2:50 that it took them by surprise.

The children, thrilled that their weekend had finally begun, ran wildly around the room picking up their coats, hats, and books that they needed to take home. In fact, everyone was in such a hurry that some of the students even left their pets behind. When the dust had cleared and everyone, including Mrs. Green, had left the room, there still remained an orangutan, a chimpanzee, a Tasmanian devil, an anteater, and a giant panda.
These animals continued to sleep for a while, and when they woke up it was five o'clock. Everyone at Pleasant Street School had gone home for the weekend, so the animals had the whole school to themselves. First, the chimpanzee let the Tasmanian devil out of its cage. Then, the orangutan opened the classroom door to let all the animals loose to roam around the building. Trouble had begun!
Meanwhile, there was not a thing the masters of the forgotten animals could do but wait until Monday to get their pets back. Luckily, there was enough food and water to last the animals the weekend. And what fun these wild animals could have for two whole days in a school building!

When Mr. Gray arrived early Monday morning to open the school for the day, he wondered why five fifth graders were standing at the front door looking in. But one glance inside told him what the students were staring at. For, when Mr. Gray looked in, he could not believe his eyes. This is what he saw—
Mr. Gray was speechless. Wherever he went in the school, everything was torn apart and out of place. Food was scattered all over the cafeteria, the office was a mess of ripped papers, and every room had been attacked and destroyed. Mr. Gray sat in his chewed-up chair and tried to decide what to do. At last he came up with an idea. He painted a sign on a huge sheet of paper and hung it above the front door.
When the school buses began to arrive, Mr. Gray was outside to meet them. He explained to each busload of children that there would be no school that day, except for those in Miss Murphy's fifth grade. While the other kids cheered for no school, the students from Room 11 slowly and sadly filed from the buses. And he told all those who walked to school the same thing. Miss Murphy's class became famous that day, but no one wanted to trade places with them.
For, as the buses rolled away, the happy students looking back could see Miss Murphy's class assembled in front of the school. And in their hands were brooms, mops, buckets, soap, and sponges. They were in for a long, hard day of cleaning the school, and they had a lot of explaining to do when Miss Murphy got there.
WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT?

An Elementary School Tragedy in Five Acts

by

Mark Serdjjenian

Prologue

One day at Pleasant Street School, some fifth grade students broke a rule; the play you're going to see today, will tell the price you have to pay, if you try to mess with Mr. Gray.
ACT I

(Classroom scene, kids at desks, Miss Murphy at desk).

NARRATOR: All of the students in Miss Murphy's fifth grade class at Pleasant Street School loved animals, so when it came time to study birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals in science, the whole class became excited. The students went about their work eagerly, each one trying to make his or her report on a special wild animal the best in the class. One Thursday afternoon, while the class was working on these science projects, a little girl raised her hand to ask the teacher a question.

(Rhonda's hand goes up).

MISS MURPHY: Yes Rhonda?

RHONDA: Miss Murphy, wouldn't it be good if we all brought in live animals to go along with our reports? That way we could see what the animals really look like, instead of just seeing them in pictures.

MISS MURPHY: Well, Rhonda, that is a very good idea, but there is one problem. There is a rule against bringing animals into school, so you'll have to go ask Mr. Gray if he will make an exception for our class.

RHONDA: O.K., I'll go check with Mr. Gray.

(after a short time she returns, shaking her head "No").

(softly) He said we can't do it. *(groans from class)*

(Short pause).

MISS MURPHY: I know you're all unhappy, and so am I. But this rule was made to protect the school building
from damage and to keep the people in it from getting hurt. Mr. Gray is right; we have to go by the rules, so let's try to get back to work now.

*(class works quietly)*

NARRATOR: For the rest of the afternoon, the class slowly settled back to work, but everyone was sad that they could not bring their animals into school. Many of the students had unusual pets at home, and would have liked a chance to show them to their classmates. At the end of the school day, Miss Murphy whispered a message into Danny's ear.

*(quiet)*

DANNY: Miss Murphy says she's losing her voice. *(listens to her)* She probably won't be in school tomorrow. *(listens again)* She wants us to be polite to the substitute teacher and to do all the work that she puts on the board. *(bell rings)* *(listens once more)*: Class dismissed! *(kinds run out)*

ACT II

*(curtain drawn, action in front of curtain)*

NARRATOR: After school was dismissed for the day, most of the kids went out to play soccer in the schoolyard for awhile. When the game was over, the players broke up into little groups and started to walk home, talking all the while about the action of the game just ended. All of a sudden, Joni came running up to some of the kids who were walking together.

*(Rhonda, Danny, Anna, Todd, Heidi, Damión walk on stage; Joni comes running after)*
JONI: (giving). What an idea I've got! It's great! (stands trying to catch her breath). 

THE OTHERS: Well, what is it?

JONI: Oh, yeah. Well, we know Miss Murphy's going to be out of school, so why don't we bring in our animals tomorrow? We'll bring them up this side stairway so Mr. Gray won't see them; then we can share our pets with each other. Not bad, huh?

TODD: I don't know. If we get caught, we'll really be in trouble. Mr. Gray and Miss Murphy both said we couldn't do it. And what about the substitute teacher?

DANNY: Oh, I bet we'll get Mrs. Green. And we could just tell her that Mr. Gray said it was all right. She'd never know the difference. Besides, we'll never get caught; we're too clever.

NARRATOR: Everyone else in the group liked the idea, and finally even Todd agreed to the plan. Each kid wrote down the names of a few others in the class to telephone that night, so that everyone would bring in their animals the next day. Even students without animals were to arrive at school early and help sneak the pets into the classroom before the first bell rang. Everything was carefully planned, including all the excuses that would be needed to trick Mrs. Green. There was no way that the plan could fail.

ACT III

"(Classroom scene; same as in Act I)"

NARRATOR: Early the next morning, everything went smoothly. Everyone was there to help get the animals up the stairs and into Room II. It was a dark, chilly, spring morning, and
some of the pets were not used to the cold weather. So even Bob and Dave, the janitors at Pleasant Street School, helped the students move the pets inside.

"(animals being carried in)"

Mr. Gray was busy in his office before school, and he had no idea that so many animals were being rushed upstairs. By the time the first bell rang on that Friday morning, all the students in Miss Murphy's class were quietly in their seats.

"(bell rings)"

Then, in walked Mrs. Green!

CLASS: Good morning Mrs. Green!

MRS. GREEN: Good morning class.

"(she sniffs around the room)"

MRS. GREEN: What is that peculiar odor?

LORETTA: Oh, that's just from some of the little pets that we have in the room. This week in science we're learning about how animals smell. See, science projects are listed on the board as part of our afternoon work.

MRS. GREEN: My goodness, you children certainly have brought in some interesting pets. But what in the world is that huge turtle doing in here?

ARTHUR: That's not a turtle. That's my pet giant tortoise. He weighs 600 pounds, and comes from the Galapagos Islands — they're near South America. Big, huh?

MRS. GREEN: Yes, he certainly is quite large, how did you get him?
ARTHUR: My great-great-grandfather was the captain of a ship. He caught him about 100 years ago on a sea voyage. Tortoises live longer than any other animal—up to 150 years old; so I'll have him for awhile. Tortoises live on land, so I don't have to keep him in water like I would a turtle.

MRS. GREEN: That's very interesting, Arthur, thank you. Oh my! Whose cat is that?

HEIDI: That's my leopard. She came from Africa. Isn't she beautiful?

LINDA: If it's your pet, why do you have to keep it in a cage?

HEIDI: That's because the leopard is the most feared of all the cats, and I couldn't let her out with all these other animals here. Even though she's only 7 feet long, she's just as dangerous as Dorothy's tiger. Ask her.

LINDA: Is that true, Dorothy?

DOROTHY: Heidi's right. Tigers are the biggest cats in Asia, but leopards are very dangerous too. So we have to keep them both in cages to protect the other animals.

HEIDI: Boy, my leopard sure would like a taste of Brian's bongo.

MRS. GREEN: What is a bongo?

BRIAN: This is a bongo. Bongos are a kind of antelope, and they live in the thick forests of Africa. They're very fast and have excellent hearing, so it's hard to catch them.

MRS. GREEN: My goodness, so far I've seen a giant tortoise, a
leopard, a tiger, and a bongo. What could possibly be next?

Tommy: How about something a little smaller, like a mudpuppy?

Stephen: What are those ugly red things on his head?

Tommy: Those are his gills. The mudpuppy is a salamander that lives in the rivers and lakes of the United States, so it needs a way to breathe underwater, like a fish. Most salamanders live on land and don't grow as big as a mudpuppy. Mine is a foot long, and most other salamanders are only half that length.

*(growling and snarling from behind Mrs. Green)*

Mrs. Green: What the devil is that?

*(the fierce growls continue)*

Debbie: This is our Tasmanian devil; she's not too friendly sometimes. That's why they are called devils. They're only 2 and a half feet long, but they are so strong that they can kill animals as big as sheep. So don't stick your fingers in her cage.

Rhonda: The Tasmanian Devil has a pouch like a kangaroo. That's where the babies live when they are born. They come from Tasmania, an island south of Australia.

Mrs. Green: My, my, this certainly is fascinating. What have we here?

Scott: That's another ferocious fighter, a wolverine; and he is found in North America, Europe, and Asia. The wolverine is the strongest mammal in the world for its size — it will attack any animal, even a bear. And it's only about 2 feet long.

Mrs. Green: We do have some fearless animals in the room
today, with a Tasmanian devil and a wolverine here together. For a change of pace though, I would like to see something a bit more gentle if possible.

DIANE: I've got a friendly little pet here.

MRS. GREEN: Yes, I have heard that raccoons make lovely pets. Did you find yours around here?

DIANE: Yes, raccoons live all over the United States. They are excellent tree climbers and swimmers. You have probably heard that raccoons wash their food before eating—that's to clean and soften the food. And they eat almost anything in sight!

TRACY: Here's another gentle animal, my giant panda.

STEPHEN: *(Laughing)* You call a bear gentle?

TRACY: Even though he looks like a 5-foot teddy bear, the giant panda is not a bear at all. It is a relative of the raccoon, and it lives in China and Tibet. The giant panda's meal is almost always the same—tender bamboo shoots. What a clown, he's always fooling around!

MICHAEL: Well, if the panda isn't a bear, that fat, furry little gray thing on Carroll's head must be a bear.

CARROLL: He does look like one, but he's not a bear either. This is a koala. Koalas are pouched animals, like the Tasmanian devil we saw, and are related to the kangaroos. They live in Australia, eating the leaves and bark of the gum trees that they live in.

MICHAEL: How long is the baby carried around in the pouch?
CARROLL: For about 6 months, then it rides on its mother's back for a year after that.

"(splashing, thrashing sounds from the pool)."

ANNA: That's my little alligator, she's only a 5-foot baby. Alligators grow twice as big as that. They live around Florida in the United States and in some rivers in China.

RANDY: What's the difference between an alligator and a crocodile?

ANNA: Alligators live in fresh water, and crocodiles live in salt water most of the time. Also, crocodiles have more pointed snouts than alligators. They belong to the same family though.

"(more splashing nearby)."

MRS. GREEN: What's in there?

TODD: My pet penguin, he came from Antarctica.

SUSAN: He sure has stumpy little wings, can he fly?

TODD: No, penguins are one of the few birds that can't fly at all. But they're good swimmers. That's how they catch the fish that they eat, by swimming. They're really friendly, and smart too.

"(Kim walks in with a bucket of fish)."

SANDRA: Oh, those must be for Todd's penguin.

KIM: Well, some of them are, but most of these fish are for my sea lion.
GERRY: That looks like a seal to me. Is there any difference between them?

KIM: The big difference is that sea lions have ears on the outside of their heads, and seals don't. Otherwise, the two are very much alike. Both are found in nearly every ocean in the world. The animals that are called "trained seals" in circus shows are usually sea lions. So there is a lot of confusion between seals and sea lions.

JONI: There's not much confusion about my pet, a great anteater is a great anteater. They come from Central and South America. Mine is 4 feet long, but they grow as big as 8 feet long. Anteaters are sometimes called ant bears— but they aren't bears at all.

SANDRA: With such a small mouth, how do anteaters eat?

JONI: They don't have any trouble because their tongues are up to 2 feet long. So after it nips open a nest with its claws, the anteater can scoop up ants and termites with its long, sticky tongue.

MRS. GREEN: Here's a pretty little pet, but it does have a rather unpleasant odor.

JANET: That's because she's scared. She's a mink, and when threatened minks give off an odor like a skunk's, but they can't spray it as far. The mink is a member of the weasel family, and it lives along streams in North America. They are raised on farms for their valuable, attractive fur.

"(quiet for a moment, then chattering overhead)."
Mrs. Green: Bring those monkeys down here boys, so that we can see them more clearly.

DANNY: They’re not really monkeys. My pet is a chimpanzee, and Damion’s is an orangutan. Both are known as great apes.

DAMION: Chimpanzees come from the jungles of Africa, and orangutans live on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. There really aren’t many differences between the two, except I have to admit that chimpanzees are smarter than orangutans.

DANNY: Both are very clever. But chimpanzees are probably the most intelligent of all the animals next to man.

MRS. GREEN: Well, that seems to be the last of the pets in the room, and I must say that...

(She faints as a huge snake hangs down in her face)...

(action freezes)

NARRATOR: But Mrs. Green never did finish that sentence, because she fainted before she could say how glad she was that no snakes had been brought in. The reason for her fainting was the giant boa constrictor which was dangling inches from where her head had been just moments before. Quickly, Paul captured the snake and returned it to its cage. The students were stunned!

(action begins again)

PAUL: What should we do? We can’t just leave Mrs. Green lying here.

LINDA: Slap her!
Randy: Kiss her!

Loretta: Throw water in her face!

*(action freezes)*

Narrator: Luckily, Mrs. Green came to without any help from the class.

*(action begins)*

Mrs. Green: I do feel much better now. For a moment there I thought I was on an African safari when I first looked around. But I do think that we should get to work for the remainder of the afternoon.

*(class settles back to desk work)*

Narrator: For the rest of the afternoon, everything was quiet in Room 11. Most of the animals slept away the time, while the students did the math, language, spelling, and reading that they should have done all day. Mrs. Green recovered from her fainting spell, and the afternoon went by without any more trouble. The children were still so busy when the bell rang at 2:50 that it took them by surprise.

*(bell rings, class explodes into cheering and running about)*

*(then, total silence)*

ACT IV

*(curtain opens to sleeping animals)*

Narrator: Everyone had been in such a hurry when the bell rang that some of the students even left their pets behind. When the dust had cleared, and everyone had left the room, there still remained a chimpanzee, *(chimp jumps around)* an anteater, *(scratches desk)* a giant panda
(throws papers in the air), an orangutan (throws paper airplane), and a Tasmanian devil (growls). These animals continued to sleep for awhile (snores), and when they woke up it was 5 o'clock. Everyone at Pleasant Street School had gone home for the weekend, so the animals had the whole school to themselves. First, the chimpanzee let the Tasmanian devil out of its cage (does it). Then the orangutan opened the classroom door to let all the animals loose to roam around the building. (they all leave, screaming and throwing papers).

Trouble had begun!
Meanwhile, there was not a thing the masters of the forgotten animals could do but wait until Monday to get their pets back. Luckily, there was enough food and water to last the weekend. But what fun those wild animals could have for 2 whole days in a school building!

**ACT IV**

*(the 5 students stand outside the closed curtain, looking in. enter Mr. Gray)*

**NARRATOR:** When Mr. Gray arrived early Monday morning to open the school for the day, he wondered why five fifth-graders were standing at the front door, looking in. But one glance inside told him what the students were staring at.

*(looks in and shakes his head in disbelief)*

**MR. GRAY:** I don't believe it!

**NARRATOR:** This is what he saw—

*(curtain opens on classroom scene of chaos, papers flying, etc.)*
NARRATOR: Mr. Gray was speechless. Wherever he went in the school, everything was torn apart and out of place. Food was scattered all over the cafeteria, the office was a mess of ripped papers, and every room had been attacked and destroyed. Mr. Gray sat in his chewed-up chair and tried to decide what to do. At last he came up with an idea.

(Mr. Gray springs to life).

MR. GRAY: I've got it.
Everyone out of the bus. (kids offstage file on).
I have an announcement to make. There will be no school today (loud cheering); except for those in Miss Murphy's class (groans). Those students come with me, please.

(they follow).

You kids tried to sneak one over on Mrs. Green, and you tried to fool me too. But you had a little bad luck, and your plan didn't work. So now you're all going to do some work for me, and clean this mess up.

(gells offstage).

Bob, Dave, you can bring those things in now.

(Bob and Dave bring in trashbarrels, brooms, buckets, etc.)

O.K., kids, let's get to work.

(curtain closes on class sweeping and scrubbing).

THE END

Epilogue

Now that our play is all through, we hope that you've learned something new—
Go by the rules and you won't get in trouble,
But try any tricks—extra work on the double!!