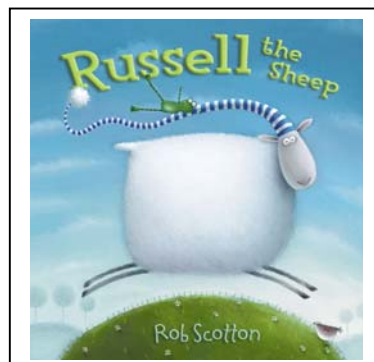


Russell the Sheep

Written by Rob Scotton



Teaching Notes

Written by Christine Sarandis

Synopsis

A quirky bedtime story introducing the endearing insomniac Russell the Sheep. Sometimes Russell the Sheep is just a little bit out of step with the rest of the flock. All the sheep are falling asleep - except Russell. He's tried everything ... but he's still wide awake. What's a sheep to do?

Biography

Rob Scotton is one of Great Britain's leading illustrators. His work can be found on greeting cards, ceramics, textiles, prints, stationery, and glassware. An honors graduate of Leicester Polytechnic, Rob now lives in Rutland, England, with his wife, Liz, who is also an artist.

Rob had only to look out of his studio window to find the inspiration for Russell. The rolling countryside surrounding his home is brimming with sheep, other wildlife, sheep, rural beauty, and more sheep. Russell the Sheep is his first picture book.

Before reading the story

Discuss the front cover illustration and engage the children in discussion about the possible story plot.

Questions for discussion after reading the story

Discuss the ways children use to help them fall asleep: bedtime story, warm drink, relaxation music/tape, exercise before bed, sleep remedies

Talk about: sleep routines, things that help or prevent children from going to sleep, the origin of counting sheep and whether or not it works, and find out whether or not sheep really do sleep on their backs.

Questions

1. Where did Russell the sheep live?
2. What did the sheep do when night fell?
3. What happened to Russell?
4. Make a list of all the things Russell did to help him fall asleep.
5. Which places did Russell try to help him sleep and what made each one unsuitable?
6. What did Russell count as part of his plan to fall asleep?
7. When did Russell actually fall asleep?
8. What was happening just after Russell finally fell asleep?
9. How did the story end?
10. Why do you think the author chose to use sheep instead of any other animal to tell this story?

Sequencing

Cut and paste photocopied sentences from the story. Have the children cut up one sentence at a time and place the words in the correct order.

E.g. "Russell thought he would never get to sleep."

thought Russell get never would he sleep. to

Rhyming Words

Make a list of words that rhyme with sheep and then place each one into a sentence.

Russell the Sheep Word Search

N P B L X D F S Y M M D B I T
T E E H O I E T I O B E I B W
N E T E E N S P T X U R L R I
C S I L L U G T M K S A L A T
C H D U R S O T E A Y C I N C
R E Q S Q B A N G N R S O C H
E E X R S W H A B N I C N H C
E P A G N O O I N E I N C R D
P C O T I L P L O E D N O H A
Y R X O G L P L N D V W R T Y
F I M H H O E I E F D E W O C
C O L D T H D R E E X O S F M
M I L L I O N B D W O L L I P
L T I C K L E C L L E S S U R
E E R H T I S T A R S K R A D

ASLEEP
BED
BILLION
BRANCH
BRILLIANT
BUSY
CAR
COLD
CRAMPED
CREEPY
CROWDED
DARK
DAY
FIELD
FROGSHOLLOW
HOLLOW
HOPPED
HOT
LONG
MILLION
MORNING
NIGHT
NINE
ONE
PILLOW
QUIET

RUSSELL
RUSTY
SCARED
SEVEN
SHEEP
SIX
STARS
TEN
THREE
TICKLE
TWITCH
TWO

A crossword puzzle grid with 11 numbered starting points. The grid is composed of white squares for letters and black squares for empty space. The numbers are: 1 (top left), 2 (top middle), 3 (middle left), 4 (top right), 5 (middle), 6 (middle right), 7 (bottom middle), 8 (bottom left), 9 (bottom right), 10 (bottom left), and 11 (bottom left).

3. Something soft to lay your head on in bed
5. Russell felt this just before he fell asleep
8. When Russell tried to sleep on this, he found it too crowded
10. Something you do at the end of a long day
11. The opposite of light

1. The opposite of loud
2. A cramped place that Russell tried to sleep in
3. A small, dark, and noisy place
4. A woolly farm animal
5. A small, dark, and noisy place
6. Russell did this to try and help him sleep
7. Russell found the hollow part of this creepy
8. A small, dark, and noisy place
9. The opposite of cold
10. Objects that shine in the night sky

Songs and Rhymes about sheep

Little Bo Peep
Baa, baa black sheep,
Little Boy Blue
Old MacDonald had a farm

Alphabetical order

Place these words from the story into alphabetical order.

Sheep, asleep, crowded, busy, quiet, night, bed, tried, dark, hot, scared, pillow, hopped, walk, count, cramped, creepy, rusty, car, Russell, brilliant, stars, hundred, million, billion, tickle, twitch, field

Opposites

Write the opposite for all of the following words from the text.

quiet night asleep hot

Wool Production

Children research the process of turning raw wool from the sheep's back into balls of coloured wool for commercial use. You could try dying some wool with vegetable dyes.

Also see if you can get hold of some sheep's wool for the children to feel. Discuss its raw waxy feel.

Retelling

Ask the children to retell the story in their own words.

Story Map

Children draw a story map, retelling the story using their own pictures. The map could be in the shape of a field, a sheep or even Russell's stripy night cap.

Farm Guessing

A verbal guessing game: Using small plastic farm animals, one child holds an animal under the table and gives descriptive clues about that animal while other children try to guess which animal he is holding.

Art Activities

Illustration

Look closely at the illustrations in the story. What do the pictures tell us that the words don't?

Using different drawing medium such as block crayons, charcoal or pen and ink, children experiment with drawing sheep and other animals depicted in the story and discuss the different advantages and disadvantages with each medium.

Knitting

Teach the children simple knitting techniques and have them make a simple scarf.

Modelling

Children use clay or other modelling medium such as Fimo or Sculpty and make a model of one of the animals depicted in the story. They could also try making a fabric hat like the one Russell wears and glue it onto their model.

Filled stocking sheep, bat or frog

Fill a stocking sock with fibre fill. Attach goggle eyes or buttons for eyes. If making a sheep, glue cotton wool all over the shape and attach pipe cleaner legs. If making a bat, children could attach leather or fabric wings and black fur or wool over their filled stocking. Alternatively, they could make a frog by covering their filled stocking with green fabric pieces and then add fabric or leather feet and legs.

Diorama

Make a diorama of a field or farm scene including Russell and his friends using many different construction materials.

You will need: shoe box, construction paper, scissors, paint, glue, modeling material, cotton wool.

Puppets

Children could make one of the following types of animal puppets: shadow, rod or hand puppet and together with their friends, put on a play for the class.

Popcorn Sheep

You will need: Popcorn and glue

Draw a picture of a sheep. Pop popcorn with the children and have them glue it onto the sheep.

Thumbprint Animals

You will need: Construction paper, paint, markers or ink pads

Have children put thumbprints on a piece of construction paper and make the prints into sheep and other farm animals. They could make a whole farm scene using this method.

Lamb

You will need: Paper, glue, cotton, scissors

Cut a lamb shaped piece out of black construction paper. Glue onto white paper. Have the kids draw in grass, sun, sky, and barn, whatever they want. Then glue cotton balls on the lamb to make him woolly.

Lamb Puppets

You will need: construction paper, paper lunch bags, glue, scissors, and pencils

1. Draw and cut out facial features from construction paper. Glue the features to the bottom of a paper lunch bag.
2. For the lamb's head, cut strips of paper and curl them by wrapping around a pencil.
3. To make the body, draw and cut a section from paper and glue it to the front of the bag.
5. Place your hand inside the bag and curve your fingers over the fold to move the puppet.

Furry Head Pencils

Watch them wiggle when you write!

You will need: 3" piece of a Feather Boa, 2 15mm goggle eyes, 1 1/2" pom pom, low temperature hot glue gun (for teacher use), pencils

Wrap a 3" piece of a feather boa around the top of pencil, securing it with hot glue. Glue on two goggle eyes and a pom pom for a nose.

Macaroni Sheep

You will need: cardboard, elbow macaroni, 2 goggle eyes, black felt, paint, white glue (pva), paintbrush

This could be a class activity or mural. Paint a field as your background. Then ask the children to cut a large shape for the sheep and decorate with elbow macaroni to make a 3D picture. Allow to dry, then paint.

Maths Activities

Using illustrations from the story, have the children compose number stories about sheep and some of the other animals in the story.

Drama Activities

Play charades with the children, asking them to choose a pre-sleep activity and get the rest of the class to guess what it is. Ask a small group of children to act out the story, perhaps with a different ending

Other books about sheep:

Pete the Sheep

Written by Jackie French and Bruce Whatley

Who sank the Boat?

Written by Pamela Allen

Where is the Green Sheep?

Written by Mem Fox

Read other fiction books featuring sheep and also some non-fiction books as well.

Interesting information for teachers - Counting sheep no aid to

LONDON, England -- Insomniacs are more likely to fall asleep by imagining a relaxing scene than by counting sheep, scientists have found.

Researchers at Oxford University discovered that the traditional cure for sleeplessness, believed to date from the 19th century, does not work because it is just too boring to keep the mind off problems and concerns.

In an experiment, 50 insomniacs were asked to try different techniques to see which helped them to fall asleep more quickly. One group imagined a relaxing, tranquil scene like a waterfall or a beach. The second tried counting sheep while a third were left to their own devices.

Those who conjured up the relaxing scene fell asleep more than 20 minutes earlier than if they did nothing. Those who counted sheep and the controls took slightly longer than normal to drop off.

"Picturing an engaging scene takes up more brain space than the same dirty old sheep," Allison Harvey, who conducted the study with Suzanna Payne, told New Scientist magazine in which details of the research were published on Thursday. "Plus it's easier to stay with it because it's more interesting."

But the researchers found that a new method for beating insomnia, "thought suppression," was also ineffective. The idea is to block an anxious or negative thought by burying it as soon as it occurs to achieve a relaxed state of mind that leads to sleep.

But Dr. Harvey found that the "suppression" group took 10 minutes longer to nod off than if they did nothing. The results replicate a psychological study in which telling someone not to think about polar bears only encourages them to think even more about them.

One in 10 people suffer from chronic insomnia, and scientists estimate that sleeplessness costs the U.S. economy \$35 billion a year in absenteeism and accidents.

"These studies represent an innovative approach to the management of insomnia," sleep researcher Charles Morin, from Laval University, Quebec, told New Scientist. Morin said he was not surprised by the finding about the suppression technique. "The more you fight those intrusive thoughts, the more they want to come back." Tackling the underlying source of worry is the only solution to insomnia, he recommended.

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/>