



Billie B. Brown: The Spotty Vacation

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Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Explore creative ways of describing emotions.
- Assist in the creation of a class book.
- Write a postcard.

About the Story:

What is more exciting than a first plane ride? A week-long stay at Grandma's house! Billie is brimming with excitement about her visit and has lots of fun things planned. But on her first morning at Grandma's house, Billie wakes up with itchy, scratchy chickenpox and is forced to stay inside until she gets better. Feeling miserable, Billie lies in bed and thinks about all of the "super-doooper" things that she will miss out on. But Billie doesn't stay miserable for long. In fact, with a little imagination (and some of Grandma's help), Billie brings each of her planned activities to life – right in the middle of Grandma's house. By the time Billie's week is over, she and Grandma have managed to visit the zoo, eat a picnic, enjoy an ice cream from the ice cream shop, go shopping for new shoes, go to the movies, play on an adventure playground and splash at Waterworld! Billie proves that even a whole week inside can be fabulous with a "super-doooper" imagination.

Before You Read the Story:

Begin by reading the back cover blurb aloud. Ask students to elaborate, if they can, on what Billie's spots might indicate. Establish whether or not any of the students have had chickenpox and ask affected students to share their memories of having itchy, scratchy skin. Ask students to explain why having the chickenpox would ruin Billie's vacation. Then read the title of the story aloud. Invite students to comment on the title.

Questions and Activities:

Chapter One

- Why is Billie as "excited as a bunny"?
- Has Billie ever been on a plane before? Does Billie enjoy her plane ride? If you think she does, what parts of the story give you that idea?
- What does Billie pack for her ride on the plane? Is there anything else you think Billie should have packed?

Activity: Revisit page 2 and highlight the sentence that describes Billie's excitement for her week-long stay at her grandma's. Ask students what they think "excited as a bunny" means. After assisting students to link the movement of a bunny with an expression of excitement, write a list of emotions on the board. This list may include feelings such as: angry, lonely, scared, brave, friendly, happy, shy, grumpy, naughty, nutty and playful. Now have students brainstorm animals that best reflect that feeling. A range of well-illustrated animal books may be distributed as prompts for the students. When students agree on an animal/feeling association, write it as a sentence on the board. For example, students may think that a mouse best represents the feeling of shyness. The teacher would then write, as shy as a



mouse. Once the list is complete, type each sentence on a separate piece of paper and distribute to individuals or small groups for students to illustrate. Bind the pages inside a cover with an agreed upon title and place them in the reading corner.

Chapter Two

- Billie goes to bed at Grandma's feeling hot and itchy. What does she wake up with?
- What does Grandma suggest that causes Billie to cry?
- When Billie calls her mom and dad to tell them about her chickenpox, what does she discover?

Activity: Refer back to the list of things Billie had planned to do on her vacation at Grandma's (page 9). Discuss why Billie can't do any of the things she had planned and how she must feel. Ask students to recall the times they have been sick and unable to leave the house and ask what they did to amuse themselves. Write these ideas on the board. Then invite students to brainstorm additional fun activities for Billie to try. Guide students so that ideas include a variety of materials and skills.

Review the ideas students have suggested and conduct a class vote for the top ten or twenty ideas. Explain to students that these ideas will be used to create a book for kids entitled "Top 10 Sick Day Activities" or something similar. The teacher should now publish the ideas, one per page, and invite individual or groups of students to illustrate. Pages should be bound and the book placed in the reading corner.

Chapter Three

- How did Billie make Grandma's family room look like a zoo? Do you have any suggestions that may make Billie's zoo even better?
- Where does Billie "go" after her trip to the zoo? Which part of Billie's "day out" do you think she enjoyed the most and why?
- Going shoe shopping was the next thing on Billie's list of things to do. How do you think Billie will turn this into her next fun activity?

Activity: Refer students to the illustration of Billie standing in the zoo. Invite students to comment on the way Billie adapted her vacation plans. Note that the zoo was at the top of Billie's "To Do" list. Ask students to consider an ideal vacation destination and the top five activities they would like to do while there. Students record this information. Then ask students to imagine that, like Billie, they reached their destination but were unable to leave their accommodation. Instruct students to choose an activity and, like Billie, recreate that experience within the confines of their accommodation. Have students illustrate and write a paragraph explaining how they would achieve this.

Chapter Four

- Billie's next activity on the list is going to the movies. How does Billie make this happen without leaving Grandma's house? By the time Billie's chickenpox have cleared up, what is it time to do?
- Why did the flight attendant look confused after speaking to Billie about her vacation?



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Activity: Review the different activities that Billie did during her vacation at Grandma's house. Choose one of these activities and model how to write a postcard from Billie to her family, detailing this activity. Instruct students to complete their own postcard which should be published and presented in a postcard format.

Teacher Tips adapted from Hardie Grant Egmont.