



THE BOY WHO GREW FLOWERS

By Jen Wojtowicz

Rink and his family live on Lonesome Mountain, a long way from the city. At school, other children stay away from Rink and gossip about him because they think he and his family are strange. One day, a new girl, Angelina arrives at school. She does not think Rink is strange. Rink and Angelina become friends by sharing their unique gifts with one another.



WITS Connection : Talk it out, Seek Help

Questions and Activities



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover of the book.
 - a. Why do you think the boy is holding flowers and green shoes?
 - b. Why do you think there is a full moon on the cover?
2. This story is about a boy who is different from others. Do you have a friend who is different from you? What are those differences?
3. When you meet people different from you how do you feel? *Unsure, frightened, excited, curious.*
4. How can you get to know someone who may seem different? *Say "hello," stand in line with them, invite them to play, offer to be their partner, sit with them at lunch.*



QUESTIONS DURING THE READING

1. Why did the townsfolk consider the Bowagons to be strange people? *They lived on the top of a mountain, they tamed rattlesnakes and some family members were "shape-shifters"-they changed shape. (page 4).*
2. Page 7 states, "As for the children, they had all heard rumors about Rink's strange relatives, so they stayed at a safe distance from him." Why did the children feel unsafe? *They heard that his family was different.* Did Rink say or do anything to make his classmates feel unsafe? *No, the class made judgements about Rink based on what they saw and heard.*
3. On page 9 Angelina asks, "Why won't anyone talk to him?" and the question "rattled in the minds" of the classmates. What does this mean? *The word, "rattle" in the story is a metaphor. We use metaphors to make comparisons. In this case rattle means to shake. The question shook their thoughts and may have caused them to re-think their assumptions and actions towards Rink.*
4. Pretend you are the classmate to whom Angelina has asked the question, "Why won't anyone talk to him?" What would you say to Angelina?
5. How would you talk it out with your friends if you saw someone like Rink in your class who needed help making friends?

6. What is a bystander? *A bystander is anyone who sees a situation but may or may not know what to do.* How could the children in the class be helpful bystanders? *Ask the same question as Angelina, "Why won't anyone talk to him?" Sit beside Rink, or volunteer to be his partner for class activities.*



QUESTIONS AFTER THE READING

1. Rink sits by himself at the back of the class. He is shy and quiet. How could Rink seek help so that he wasn't alone at school? *He could talk to his teacher or his parents about what it is like to be alone at the back of the class. They could help him become friends with his classmates.*
2. If Rink was in your class what could you do to help him so that he wasn't alone? *Invite him to play a game, sit next to him, volunteer to be his partner, compliment him on his work.*
3. What were some materials Rink used to make Angelina's slippers that his classmates may have considered strange? *Fat Lucy's shucked off skin, his mama's purse - a bowling bag, and some old leather off the saddle of a mule.*
4. After making the slippers Rink feels so happy deep inside that his head sprouted flowers. Sometimes people behave differently when they are very happy. What behaviours have you seen when people seem very happy? *Some people move quickly, jump, scream, shout, clap and even cry.*
5. Rink gave Angelina the gift of dancing slippers that perfectly fit her feet. What gift did Angelina give Rink? *Angelina gave Rink the gift of friendship by inviting him to the dance.*



ACTIVITIES AFTER THE READING

- *What do we have in common?*
Assemble students into pairs. Distribute the *What do we have in common?* handout to each pair of students. One student will write their name in left window of the school and the other student will write their name in the right window of the school. Under their respective windows students will write those qualities that make them unique or different from their partner. In the triangle that forms the roof of the school the pair of students will write those qualities, likes or dislikes that they have in common. Invite students to share their responses with the rest of the class.
- *A class mural of similarities and differences*
Distribute magazines or newspapers in which students will cut out pictures of adults or children. To ensure that there is diversity in the selection of pictures, you may wish to cut out all the pictures and place them in a basket so that students use the pre-selected images. Ask students to select and paste the cut-outs on a large piece of paper. Once the mural is completed discuss with students those similarities and differences between the images.
- *Footprint and handprint activity*
Distribute paper to each child and ask them to trace an outline of their hand on one side of the paper and trace an outline of their foot on the other side of the paper. Direct students to circulate the class looking for people who have similar footprints and handprints as well as those who have different footprints and handprints. Discuss the differences and similarities of their prints in the class.

- *Guess who?*

Distribute a piece of cardboard the size of a playing card to each student. Ask students to draw image that represents something unique about them on one side of the card (if needed suggest examples such as a horse, a musical note or a piece of sports equipment). Tell students not to reveal their card to anyone else. Assemble students in small groups of four to six people. Collect the completed cards from each small group shuffle them and redistribute the cards back to the small groups with the image face up. Ask the small groups to closely examine the images and guess the owner of each card. Once the small groups have agreed on the possible owner of each card invite them to share their answers with the class. Allow each card owner to explain why they drew the image to represent them. Ask other members of the class if they may have also selected that image for their card too.

THE BOY WHO GREW FLOWERS : *What do we have in common?*

What do we have in common?

What is unique about me?

What is unique about me?