

Teaching Suggestions

My teaching guides offer suggestions for parents and teachers. Feel free to select and even modify the activities that you think will work with your child or student. Some of the activities will require preparation on your part before you use them (a library visit, web-based research, etc.)

OVERVIEW

Much of the humor in the *Waltur* stories rests on the difference between an idiom's literal meaning and its actual meaning — Waltur usually interprets the words literally, while Matilda usually understands the meaning of the idiom. Whenever he hears a new turn of phrase, Waltur's first impulse is to ask, "Why not?" In discovering "why not," he comes to understand the age-old wisdom of the idiom.

Idioms are word usages that cannot be understood literally — they have meaning to the native speakers of a language because the native speakers learn what the words or phrases actually mean. For example, the sentence "Jason eats like a horse" does not mean that Jason stands in a stall and munches on hay, which is what, taken literally, the words convey. Instead, "eats like a horse" is an idiom that means "eats a large amount of food."

A living language is constantly changing: some word uses are dying out, some are being born every day. This constant change has been a characteristic of language since its beginnings: there are people in every generation who love playful language. Many of these playful uses of language have hung around for hundreds of years as idioms. Most of the longer idioms are proverbs embodying not only colorful use of language, but wisdom as well. The idioms in *Waltur Buys a Pig in a Poke* are proverb-based idioms.

MATH

- Suppose that Waltur had a dozen eggs and they all hatched into chicks. Suppose he sold the chicks for \$1 each. How much money would he make? Suppose each jar of honey cost \$2 — how many jars of honey could he buy?
- But what if Waltur's dozen eggs hatched into ducklings that sold for \$3 each — how much money could he make? How many jars of honey could he buy?
- Suppose that the fox charged Waltur \$15 for the pig in the poke and Waltur paid him with a \$50 bill — how much change should the fox give Waltur?
- If Waltur gave the pig to Darwin for free, how much money did Waltur lose by buying the pig in a poke?

SCIENCE

- What animals other than chickens and ducks lay eggs? Are all egg-layers birds? What other animals besides birds lay eggs?
- What is incubation?
- How many days must chicken eggs incubate before they hatch?
- How many days must duck eggs incubate before they hatch?

SOCIAL STUDIES

- There are many different kinds of pigs. Here are four:

American Yorkshire

Chester White

Hereford Hog

Poland China

Learn more about these four types of pigs. Make a chart naming the four kinds. Next to each kind, write a brief description — what color it is, about how it weighs, where it comes from.

- Some people keep a pig as a pet. Read about pigs as pets. Why do people like them as pets? What are some of the problems in keeping a pig as a pet?

- If you were going to get a pet, what kind would you want? Why?

- Imagine that you are a horse who isn't thirsty and somebody comes along and tries to make you drink. How would you feel? What would you say or do?

HISTORY

- Watch a movie such as *Oliver Twist* (2005). Oliver carries his few possessions in a bundle. He seems to not have pockets. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a bundle.

- What are some of the differences between a bag (poke) and a bundle? Would a farmer from long ago sell his piglets in a bag or in a bundle? Why?

WRITING

- Write a story showing what happens to Darwin and the pig once they go home to Darwin's house.
- How did the chicken eggs turn out to be duck eggs? Write a story telling how this happened.
- The front cover of the book shows Matilda riding the horse — write a story showing how Matilda and the horse ended up being friends.
- The idiom “to get up on the wrong side of bed” means that a person wakes up in a bad mood. But what if everybody's bed had a both a “right side” and a “wrong side.” What would the “right side” be like? What would the “wrong side” be like. Write a story showing somebody waking up on the wrong side of bed.