

LEONARDO, THE TERRIBLE MONSTER

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by Mo Willems

Ages: 4-7

Lexile®: AD670; Guided Reading Level: I

Themes: Feelings, Friendship, Humor, Problem Solving, Self-Confidence

SUMMARY

Leonardo is a terrible monster. He is terrible at scaring people. No matter how hard he tries, he just can't seem to make anyone scream or run from him in fear. He isn't big, he doesn't have thousands of teeth, and he isn't even weird. So, Leonardo begins his search for the biggest scaredy-cat kid he can find. That's when he meets Sam. He tries every trick he knows to scare Sam until finally, Sam cries. And *that's* when Leonardo finds out that scaring people maybe isn't what he wants to do after all...

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify qualities that make a good friend.
- Students will identify how Leonardo changed during the course of the story.
- Students will create artwork of scary monsters.
- Students will make text-to-text connections.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Elicit students' ideas about friendship. On chart paper, compose a list of qualities that students believe make good friends. Then, have students illustrate a picture of a person who is a special friend to them. Encourage them to be detailed. Ask guiding questions:

- What does he/she look like? Hair color/style? Eye color? Unusual or beautiful features?
- What kind of clothing does he/she wear?
- How tall/short is he/she?
- What can you draw to show what activities this person likes?

After students have finished their illustrations, have them write, or write for them, one sentence that describes their friend. Finally, tell students that they will hear a story in which one of the characters becomes a friend to another. Encourage them to be alert for qualities of the character that they listed that made him a good friend.

Lead a discussion on peer pressure. Define peer pressure as doing something that you may not do ordinarily because other people you know are doing it or they encourage you to do it. Help students brainstorm examples of things that people do because of peer pressure. Categorize the list into positive peer pressure and negative peer pressure. Discuss with students the benefits of encouraging their friends to make good choices. Also discuss how giving in to negative peer pressure often hurts many people and can carry serious consequences. Tell the students that in the program that they will see, a little monster believes that he has to be mean and scary because other monsters are mean and scary. Encourage students to watch and listen for Leonardo's big decision and to think about how it changed him and his life.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Use a graphic organizer to lead a discussion with the students about how Leonardo changed during the story. Divide a piece of chart paper into three sections, labeled, "Leonardo in the Beginning," "Leonardo at the End," and "How Leonardo Stayed the Same." Help students elicit ideas for each column. Guiding questions:

- What did Leonardo want in the beginning of the story?
- How did he act in the beginning?
- Why did Leonardo act the way he did?
- What did Leonardo want at the end of the story?
- How did he act in the end?
- What happened to make Leonardo change his behavior?
- What things were the same about Leonardo throughout the story?
- What happened when he made his "big decision"?

Fill in the graphic organizer with students' ideas. Then, give students a graphic organizer of their own and have them draw pictures for each section that show Leonardo at the beginning and end of the story.

Provide students with a collection of magazines and guide them through making a "Scary Monster Collage." First, make a list of types of pictures to look for in the magazines, such as big teeth, sharp claws, unusual hair, etc. Then, provide students with a choice of monster body templates that they can use as a guide to glue on their cut-outs. Finally, when the students' collages are complete, help them write one to two sentences describing their monster. Older children should work on their own writing, while you can transcribe the younger children's ideas.

Show the Weston Woods movie, *Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak. After viewing the movie, guide students through making text-to-text connections between *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Leonardo, the Terrible Monster*. Provide students with a T-chart that separates how Leonardo is different from the monsters in *Wild Things*, and how he is similar. Guiding questions:

- How does Leonardo look different than the monsters in *Wild Things*? How does he look similar?
- How does Leonardo act differently than the monsters in *Wild Things*? What does he do that is similar?
- How are Max and Sam alike and different?

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