

THE DOUGHNUTS

The Doughnuts
by Robert McCloskey (Viking)
Themes: Humor/Problem Solving
Level: Grades K - 5
Length: 20 minutes, live action

Summary

THE DOUGHNUTS takes place in the 1940's when an uncle of a boy named Homer opens a luncheonette. Uncle Ulysses, much to the chagrin of his wife Agnes, is a man fond of new-fangled gadgets and has installed a doughnut making machine in his restaurant.

One evening, while Homer is visiting his uncle's restaurant, Uncle Ulysses leaves Homer in charge of putting the finishing touches on the doughnut machine while he stops by the barber shop. Homer works on the machine and is soon visited by an "advertising man" who stops by for coffee and a doughnut. While the man waits for the doughnut machine to begin working, a wealthy woman enters the restaurant. She asks Homer if she can mix up the doughnut batter for him, takes off her diamond bracelet, and sets to work. Soon the doughnut machine is working--too well! Homer cannot stop the doughnuts from popping out of the machine! The woman is gone and Homer and the advertising man look for places to store the doughnuts.

Homer and the man put their heads together and come up with a scheme to sell the doughnuts "2 for 5 cents" in order to be rid of them. Eventually, the wealthy woman returns, claiming to have left her bracelet in the restaurant. Shortly, it becomes evident that the bracelet must be in one of the hundreds of doughnuts. Homer has an idea! He makes a sign offering one hundred dollars for anyone who can find the bracelet. It doesn't take long for the doughnuts to be gobbled up and the bracelet to be found. The end of the story finds Uncle Ulysses trying to explain to skeptical Aunt Agnes why there are tons of crumbs

from dozens of doughnuts left on the restaurant counter!

Objectives

- Children will appreciate humor in a story
- Children will explore problem-solving techniques
- Children will investigate the benefits of working cooperatively

Before Viewing Activities

Share the chapter entitled "The Doughnuts" from the book Homer Price with children. Ask children to name all of the machines they can think of that make our work easier. Encourage children to consider how these machines are beneficial and what our lives might be like if we did not have these machines.

Discuss restaurants children may frequent with their families. Ask: What do you like most about eating in restaurants? What do restaurants smell like? look like? What kinds of sounds do you hear in restaurants? What kind of jobs do people have in restaurants? What kinds of equipment would be useful in restaurants? Tell children that the film they are about to see takes place in a brand new luncheonette. As they view the film, encourage children to think about the ways this luncheonette compares to restaurants they have experienced.

After Viewing Activities

Supply children with crayons and construction paper that they can use to create their own labor-saving machines. When they have finished, have children describe their machines to their classmates, including a description of the materials the machine is made of, how it operates, and how it saves time and energy. Later, supply cardboard boxes of various sizes, pipe cleaners, buttons, and other art materials that children can use to construct three

dimensional versions of their machines.

Remind children of the way Homer solved the problem of the missing bracelet. Ask: What two things did Homer's idea accomplish? What other ways could Homer have suggested to help the lady find her bracelet? Then help children recall how Homer called his uncle when the doughnut machine would not stop working. Ask: What would you have done if you were Homer and needed to stop the machine? What kind of advertising slogan would you use to help sell the doughnuts? (You might want to provide children with small sheets of poster board and markers they can use to create their advertisements.)

Plan a field trip to a local diner or restaurant. Encourage children to ask questions as they are guided through the various parts of the diner/restaurants. When you return to the classroom, have children discuss what they found most surprising/interesting about the trip. Work with children to create thank-you notes for their restaurant guides.

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