

**Welcome to Childsplay's
Resource
Guide for Teachers and
Parents**

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your children for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, classroom activities that deal with curriculum connections and education standards, and resource materials.

The Story:



Sweet Miss Nelson in classroom 207 has a problem. Her students are completely out of control. The big test is on Monday and she cannot get them prepared. But then the substitute teacher, Viola Swamp shows up ... Room 207 will never be the same!

Anyone who's ever set foot in an elementary school will recognize the disruptive kids in Room 207 and sweet but ineffectual teacher Miss Nelson. When Viola Swamp shows up, suddenly everything changes: homework, discipline, math, math and more math. Where is Miss Nelson? When will she come back? The students miss her! Join us and cheer for Miss Nelsons everywhere!

Curriculum Connections:

Page to stage * following rules *
disguises * looking for clues *
missing persons * substitutes *
conflict management



**Based on the Book by Harry Allard and
James Marshall**

Adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher

Directed by **Dwayne Hartford**

Scenic Design by **Aaron Jackson**

Costume Design by **Connie Furr-Soloman**

Lighting Design by **Rick Paulsen**

Sound Design by **Anthony Runfola**

Animation/Video: **Andrés Alcalá and Anthony
Runfola**

Stage Manager: **Abigail Hartmann**

The Cast

Miss Nelson. Katie McFadzen
Raymond. Ricky Araiza
Phoebe. Kate Haas
George. Israel Jiménez
LaVita. Elizabeth Polen
Morris. Drew Ignatowski
Kimberly. Allison Bishop
Elvis. Debra K. Stevens
Principal Humleker/
Detective McSmogg. David Dickinson

Production sponsors:



Childsplay's 2008-2009 Season Resource Guides
prepared by
Drew Chappell and Katie McFadzen

Things to Talk About and Do :

Theater Etiquette:

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before



seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:
~Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our school performances.

~Stay seated during the performance.

~ Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance. Remember, the actors can see and hear the audience just like you can see and hear them.

~ Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.

~Food, candy, gum and beverages are not allowed in the theater.

~Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device is *not allowed in the theater at any time!*

From the PAGE to the STAGE



When a playwright takes a book and *adapts* it into a play, he or she must answer many questions, including:

- Can this book be an effective play?
- Who are the most essential characters? What are the most essential events?
- How can I confine the action to the space of the stage?
- Do I need to suggest ways to stage certain actions, changes of location, etc.?
- Is there anything *not* in the book that should be in the play?

Theatres like to produce adaptations because typically the plays are based on well-known books that will bring in audiences. But almost always, books are not intended to be turned into plays, and so translating them into scripts can seem "unnatural" or awkward. The playwright must find what is "theatrical" about the book and concentrate on those elements in order to create a successful adaptation. Theatrical elements might include conversations between characters, supernatural or imaginary characters, actors playing more than one character, multiple events taking place at the same time in different areas of the stage, stylized movement, and use of masks or puppets.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were a playwright, would you rather write an adaptation of an existing book or write an original play? Why?
2. Do you like seeing plays based on books you've read? Why or why not?
3. How are plays different from TV shows or movies? What are the limitations of a play (things that can't be done on stage)?
4. What parts of the book *Miss Nelson is Missing* do you think will be difficult to stage? Why?
5. What other books do you know of that have been turned into a play?



Production Elements:

The production team includes costume designer, lighting designer, sound designer, and scenic designer and for this production, animation/video designer. All of the designers work together with the director to create the various elements of the production. The scenic designer's job is to create the settings for the play. For *Miss Nelson is Missing* scenic designer Aaron Jackson had to come up with several different locations for the story. At right is a preliminary design for the look of Miss Nelson's classroom at night. How do you think designers come up with their ideas? What might some of their influences be?



Activity: Adapting a favorite book into a play

Objective- Students will begin to understand the process of adapting a book for the stage.



1. Have each student choose a favorite book. Tell them they will be re-imagining a scene from that book as a play scene.
2. Students choose a scene from the book to adapt. The scene should have dramatic action (characters dealing with a problem), and students should have an idea of how to stage the action.
3. Show students a page from a script if they are unfamiliar with script format.
4. Students write their scenes, starting with stage directions setting the scene and continuing through dialog and action until they reach a resolution.
5. Students trade their script pages and read each other's work *or* cast their scenes (with teacher guidance) and read them in reader's theatre style.
6. Students give each other feedback on how the scene translated from page to stage (focusing on what was clear and what confused them or caused them to "tune out") and suggest directions to go next with the script.

Scaling up: Have older students plan a scene breakdown for their entire book. How many scenes need to be included? Do any need to be added? Where is the climax of the book/play? How can they use the elements of the stage to tell the story of the book? They can do this using a storyboard format.

Scaling down: Have younger children draw a picture of a scene from the book as it would appear on the stage, create a tableau image (frozen picture) of the scene, or dramatize the scene using minimal set and costumes or puppets.

Post-Show

Discussion Questions:



1. Which characters and events did the playwright focus on? Were these good choices?
2. Was there anything not in the book that was included in the play? Why do you think the playwright chose to include it?
3. How did the playwright and director deal with the parts of the book you thought would be difficult to stage? Would you have made the same choices? Why or why not?



To the left is Aaron Jackson's preliminary design for Miss Nelson's house.

Some questions about the design...

Pre-show: What do you think the scenery will look like? Based on your knowledge of the book, how many different settings do you think there will be?

Post-show: Did you see influences from the book in Mr. Jackson's designs? What were they? If you were the scenic designer, what would you have done differently?

THEME 1: GOOD AND BAD BEHAVIOR

Pre-Show

In this play, Miss Nelson's classroom is "out of control." They won't listen to Miss Nelson, they won't do their lessons, and they make fun of each other. A classroom is an important part of a child's life. It's a space where students learn not only about academic subjects, but also about social skills. One of the most important skills for a teacher to learn is classroom management. This allows teachers to set up their classroom so that everyone can learn in a comfortable environment, where both students and teachers are invested in what's going on in the classroom. Sometimes children turn to bad behavior when they are angry or bored, so teachers also learn how to understand their students and help them.



Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been in a class or on a field trip where you thought the students were out of control? How did that affect what you were doing?
2. Who decides what is right or good behavior? Do you think those decisions are fair? Why or why not? Is there ever a time when it is OK to break the rules or "misbehave?"
3. How would you explain to someone from another culture how students are expected to act in your classroom?
4. What might you do if you were a teacher and your class refused to behave?

Post-Show

Discussion Questions:

1. How "bad" was Miss Nelson's class? What would it be like to be in her class at the beginning of the play?
2. How did the class's behavior affect Miss Nelson? How do you think your class's behavior affects your teacher?
3. What did Miss Swamp do to motivate Miss Nelson's class to behave better? How would you have responded to Miss Swamp?
4. How did the small group of students work together to try and solve the mystery of Miss Nelson's disappearance? Do you think they would have worked with each other had Miss Nelson not gone missing?

Activity: Creating an Ideal Classroom

Objective: Students will learn about the process of classroom management and the job of the teacher.

1. Tell students they are going to plan "the perfect" classroom. They will be designing how it looks and works.
2. Talk to students about the difference between needs and wants. What does a person need to be healthy and happy? What does a person want? How are they different? Discuss what needs and wants might look like in a classroom.
2. Divide students into small groups. Give each group several pieces of paper (one blank).
3. Ask students to make a chart with 4 boxes. Label the boxes: daily tasks, free time, rules, and consequences.
4. As a group, the students fill out the chart and draw a map of their ideal classroom. When filling out the chart, they should consider what *needs* to happen and what they would *like* to happen. When making the map, they should consider use of space, arrangement of desks, classroom equipment (including technology and library resources), etc.
5. When groups have finished, have them share their ideal classrooms with their classmates, explain why they are ideal, and consider whether they are practical. Talk as a class about how they might apply some of their ideas to their actual classroom.



Scaling up: Have older students design an entire ideal school. What would it look like? How would it function? Would there be teachers? Classrooms? How would it be different from the school they attend?

Scaling down: Have younger students draw an ideal classroom (or create tableau images of one). Talk about why classrooms have rules and ask how they would revise the rules for their ideal classrooms.

Cross curricular connections:

Social studies (societies and their laws, schooling around the world); literature (stories about misbehavior, bullies, alternate worlds/societies)

THEME 2: MISSING PEOPLE, PETS, AND THINGS

Pre-Show

Introduction (to read aloud or for your knowledge):

Every year, people go missing in the United States. Some are the victims of crime, but some choose to leave and create new lives for themselves. In this play, Miss Nelson disappears, and her students wonder where she might have gone. Pets also go missing or are abandoned by their owners. And of course, we all lose things every day. Sometimes we don't find them, but most of the time we do and it is always an adventure to look for them.



Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever read or heard about someone disappearing? What protections are in place to help missing children? (AMBER alert, police and community searches)
2. If you have pets, do you have a system in place to identify them so they can be returned to you? What is it?
3. Are you someone who loses things easily? Why do you think this is? What objects do your other family members lose the most? Where do they usually find them?
4. If you could attach one object to an electronic "locator," which object would you choose? Why?
5. Pick one thing you lose easily and identify a place where you could always "store" that object. Where would it be? Who could you ask for help?

Post-Show

Discussion Questions:

1. What were some of the things the students imagined might have happened to Miss Nelson? How realistic do you think their guesses were?
2. If you were Principal Humlecker, what would you have done after Miss Nelson had been missing for a few days?
3. Under what circumstance do you think Miss Nelson might "go missing" again?

Activity: Letter from lost toy

Objective: Students will imagine an object as a character and create a short story around that character.

1. Students identify a toy they own that has a specific "personality."
2. In whole group, brainstorm some places toys might like to go.
3. Students write a short letter from their toy explaining where it is and what it is doing. They might also include a drawing of a "souvenir" the toy has sent with the letter or create postcards using parts of their letters.
4. In whole group or small groups, students read their letters aloud in character as their toy.

Scaling up: Have older children write a series of letters from a favorite object as it goes on a trip to locations they've researched.

Scaling down: Have younger children draw "photographs" of their toy on its trip and tell the story of the trip in pairs.

Cross curricular connections:

Science (investigation tools and processes); literature (stories about lost people); math (statistics on lost pets, establishment of search zones)



People lose things all the time. According to PC World Magazine, 85,000 phones, 21,000 PDAs and PocketPCs and 4,300 laptops were lost in Chicago taxi cabs in 2005 alone (from ImHonest.com).

THEME 3: DISGUISES AND DECEPTION



Pre-Show

Introduction (to read aloud or for your knowledge):

Disguises have been used since ancient times to hide people's identities. Sometimes they are used for entertainment- at Halloween, for example, or a costume party. Actors wear disguises (costumes and makeup) to help the process of playing a character- imagining themselves as someone else. Sometimes the stakes of disguises are very high- spies and law enforcement officers must pretend to be someone else so that they can solve crimes or bring criminals to justice. Pretending to be someone else can be a crime in itself. Posing as a police officer deceives the public and can be a way to abuse the trust people put in law enforcement officers. Pretending to have the knowledge and ability to do something like fly a plane or operate in a patient also puts people's lives at risk.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever worn a disguise? Why? Did it work?
2. What are some characters from stories and movies you can think of that wear disguises? Why do they wear them?
3. Do you think it is right to trick people by wearing disguises? If so, under what circumstances? What would happen if it were illegal to disguise yourself for any reason?
4. Are there any aspects about you that you cannot disguise? (fingerprints, DNA, a unique marking)

Post-Show

Discussion Questions:

1. How did you know that Miss Nelson was in disguise? When did you figure it out?
2. Do you think it was right for Miss Nelson to disguise herself?
3. If you were one of Miss Nelson's students and found out that she tricked you (like Raymond did in the play), what would you say to her?
4. If you were Miss Nelson, would you reveal your trick? When and why?

Activity: Trying on disguises

Objective: Students will understand the role of costume in playing a character.

1. Before the lesson, gather objects and costume pieces for students to try on as disguises, or have students bring these items from home. Also bring a few mirrors and/or an instant camera.
2. In small groups, students try on costume pieces and look at themselves in the mirror (or take some instant photos and give them to the students).
3. Individually, students develop a character profile based on their costume. Have them outline traits such as: name, age, job, friends/family, favorite object, greatest wish, and greatest fear.
4. Students share their characters with the class (in costume, speaking as their characters, if you wish).

Scaling up: Have older students use this activity as the basis for writing a play or short story about their character. You may have them combine their character with others' to create interesting situations.

Scaling down: Have younger students try on the costume pieces and then draw a picture of their character. Ask them about their character, write some of the profile information on the drawing, and create a classroom character gallery.

Cross curricular connections: Language arts (stories about spies or other disguised characters); Science (make up effects, camouflaged animals); Math (deduction)



It's fun to wear a disguise. Encourage your students to wear their own disguise (a hat, glasses, fake nose or whatever) when they come to see the play! You might even try making disguises in class.



FULL LESSON PLAN

Standards:

Language Arts Listening/Speaking

LS-E3. Interpret and respond to questions and evaluate responses both as interviewer and interviewee
LS-E4 Predict, clarify, analyze and critique a speaker's information and point of view

Theatre

PO 202. Dramatize and document scenes using a variety of characters to develop monologues and/or dialogue.
PO 204. Collaborate in informal performances.

Objective: Students will become familiar with creating tableau images. They will assume to role of a character from the book, and they will devise questions for Miss Nelson.

Assessment: Observation and whole group reflection

Materials: A few copies of Miss Nelson is Missing. A costume piece for teacher in role (if desired)

Introduction: Have the students recall what the kids in Miss Nelson's class were like. Ask: would you want to be a student in that class? Why or why not? What would you do if you found out Miss Nelson and Miss Swamp were the same person?

Procedure:

1. Tableau images of Miss Nelson's class- introduce the concept of *tableau*: still pictures formed by students' bodies. (Like photographs). Beginning with 2-5 students, have the class form group tableaux of: a. Miss Nelson's class before Miss Swamp; b. Miss Nelson's class on the first day Miss Swamp showed up; and c. Miss Nelson's class after a week of Miss Swamp. To form the group tableaux, have a few students add themselves into the picture at a time. If students, get tired, have them stand and shake their bodies out, then return to their positions.

2. Waiting for Miss Nelson- divide the class into 4-5 small groups. Each group will write a monolog with the following sentence frames.

I know__

I wonder__

I hope__

I fear__

The monologues take place after Miss Nelson has been missing for about 2 weeks. Each group takes a different perspective, writing as one of the following characters: one of Miss Nelson's students, Detective McSmogg, Principal Humlecker, and a parent of one of Miss Nelson's students. (For five groups, assign 2 groups 2 separate students from the class, such as Raymond and Phoebe). Ask one student in each group to be the recorder, and the others to brainstorm ideas. After the groups finish their monologs, have the students choral read them out loud. (Each group has its members read its poem in unison).

3. Questioning Miss Nelson- Tell the students that you are going into role as Miss Nelson. You are going to play the scene that takes place directly after Miss Nelson reveals that she disguised herself as Miss Swamp. When you become Miss Nelson, adopt a costume piece such as a hat or scarf. When you come out of role, you will remove this costume piece. You may wish to begin with the following statement: "I know many of you will be upset that I pretended to be someone else, but I hope you know that I was doing it for the good of everyone in the class. Do you have any questions for me?" Allow the students to ask questions. (If they do not bring these topics up, you may wish to cover: how you created Miss Swamp, what you liked about being her, and how it made you feel to have a class that was out of control.) When you wish to stop the teacher in role segment, simply excuse yourself as Miss Nelson.

Reflection: Suggested discussion questions- What did you learn from doing the tableau images? What was it like to hold your body in the position of one of Miss Nelson's students? How did you collaborate with your group to write the monolog? Do you think Miss Nelson was wrong to do what she did? Do you understand her reasons? How would you respond if someone admitted to tricking you this way? What did you learn about what it's like to be a teacher?



Miss Nelson's Journey

The Police Station



Resources...

About Childsplay:

Childsplay is a non-profit professional theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood, which are the keys to the future.



We love to hear from our audience members!

Email us at:

info@childsplayaz.org

Check out our web site:

www.childsplayaz.org

Our new home is The Sybil B. Harrington Campus of Imagination and Wonder at Mitchell Park
900 S. Mitchell
Tempe, AZ 85281

480.921.5700

Booklist

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham, Member, Board of Directors, Association for Library Service to Children

The Miss Nelson Series:

Miss Nelson is Missing by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall

Miss Nelson is Back by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall

Miss Nelson Has a Field Day by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall

Curriculum Connections:

Following Rules

Following Rules by Robin Nelson

Rules of the Wild by Bridget Levin

Delila D. at the Library by Jeanne Willis

Disguises

Strega Nona's Magic Lessons by Tomie DePaola

Why a Disguise? by Laura Joffe Numeroff

Trupp: A Fuzzhead Tale by Janelle Cannon

Boo! by Colin McNaughton

Bad Boys by Margie Palatini

Looking for Clues

The 13th Clue by Ann Jonas

The Missing Mitten Mystery by Steven Kellogg

Young Cam Jansen and the Molly Shoe Mystery by David A. Adler

Young Cam Jansen and the Missing Cookie David A. Adler

Detective Small in the Amazing Banana Caper by Wong Herbert Yee

Jake Gander: Storyville Detective by George McClements

Who Killed Cock Robin? by Kevin O'Malley

Missing Persons

Young Cam Jansen and the Double Beach Mystery by David A. Adler

Nate the Great and the Big Sniff by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat

Mystery by Arthur Geisert

Substitutes

Jamaica and the Substitute Teacher by Juanita Havill

Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia by Peggy Parish

Substitute Teacher Plans by Doug Johnson

Young Cam Jansen and the Substitute Mystery by David A. Adler

Conflict Management

No Dessert Forever! by George Ella Lyon

The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig by Eugene Trivisas



Want Some Drama in Your Classroom?

If you would like help incorporating drama into your curriculum by having Teaching Artist come into your classroom, Childsplay can help. We offer a variety of artist-in-residence and teacher training experiences. We can also help with pre- and post-show activities related to the production. For more information, contact Patricia Black at: pblack@childsplayaz.org or 480.921.5750

Websites of Interest:

Biography of Harry Allard, author:

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/allard.htm>

Biography of James Marshall, illustrator (scroll down to his name):

www.hbook.com/history/bios.asp

Classroom Management Resources:

www.teachervision.fen.com/classroom-management/resource/5776.html

Missing Pets Website: www.missingpets.com/

Disguise Activity: <http://pbskids.org/boohbah/parentsteachers/activity140.html>

Study Guide from Omaha Theatre for Young People:

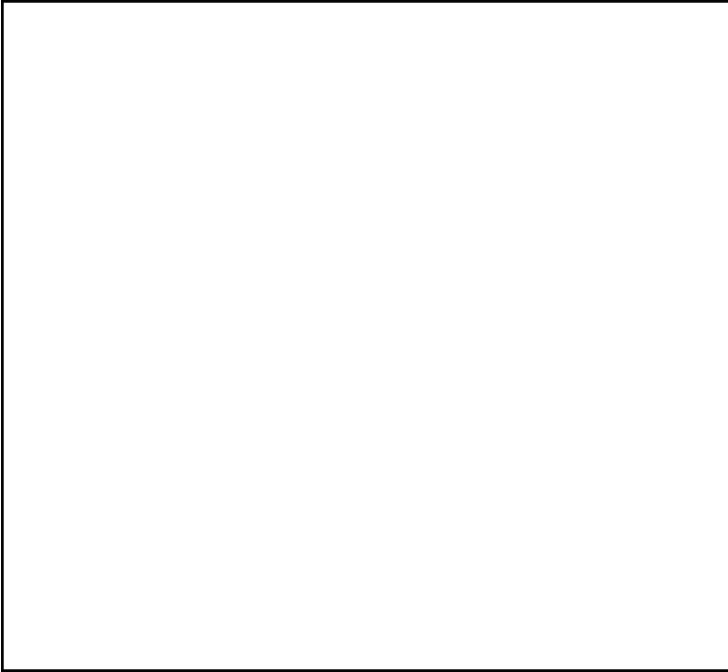
www.fairfield.edu/documents/quick/MissNelson.pdf

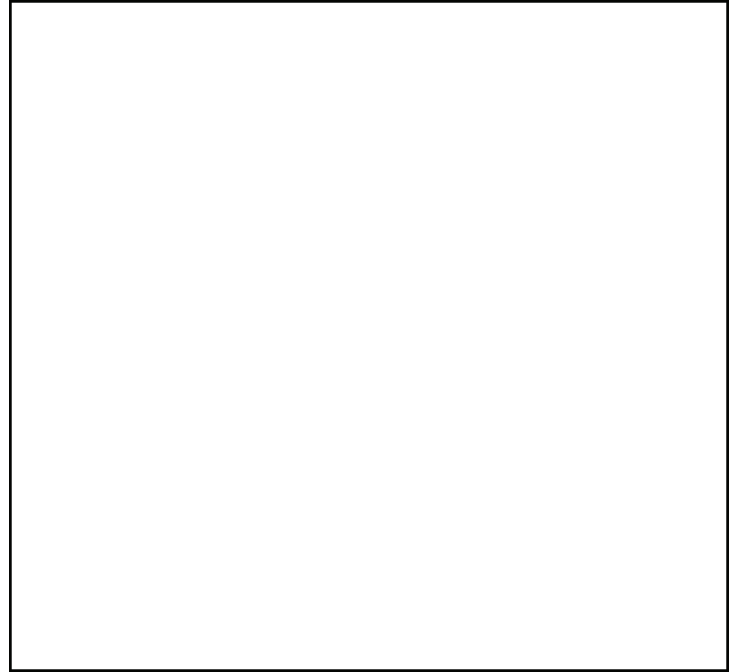
Study Guide from California Theater Center:

www.ctcinc.org/Study%20Guides/NELSON.htm

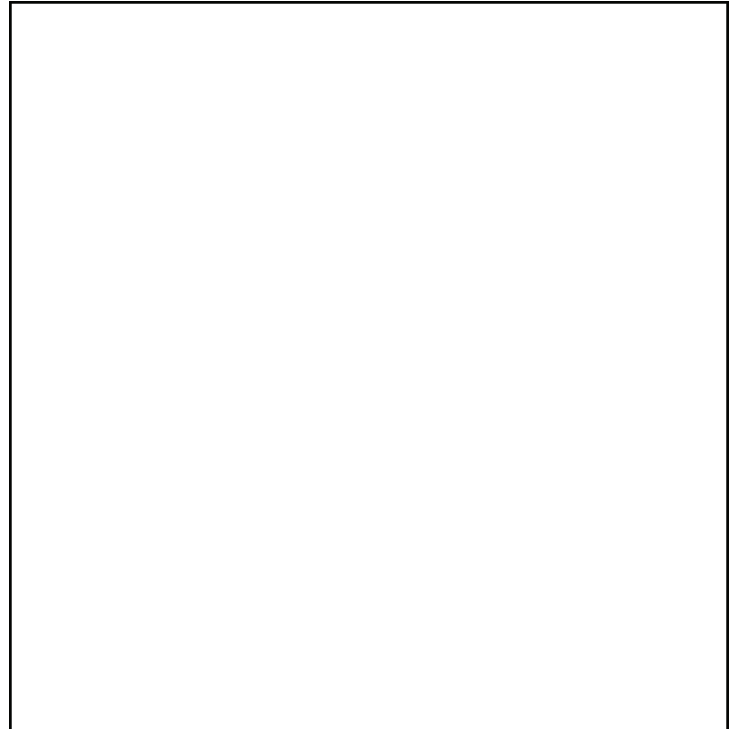
Miss Nelson's Disappearance.

The students imagine all kinds of different things that might have happened to Miss Nelson. Imagine others things that might have happened to her. What did she do? Where did she go? What kept her from coming to class? Draw your ideas and then write captions explaining the pictures on the lines below each box.









Just For Fun...

D U J P O A Q O U V N F G E A
L N K I T U T X P Q F R G C Z
P Y O I I V G A W I K U O B K
P M V M E K E D L A E T M W G
E A A P Y G E O R G E X S F X
L P S W H A Q L W Q X Q C K M
N X T K S O R H V N W Z M O P
E Y S J D N E K Q Z L Q U J M
L W M Q Q Z I B S L A S M Q V
S N G T N M T R E K E L M U H
O A E B B W Z T D M T Z G B N
N N K E J N X G F W F L O J L
D S R Q T W T W D R N F K I M
X L D A Y J I A T U S Y W U Y

Character Word Search:

Can you find the names of the characters from *Miss Nelson is Missing* in the word search puzzle?

ELVIS

GEORGE

HUMLEKER

KIMBERLY

LAVITA

MCSMOGG

MOUSE

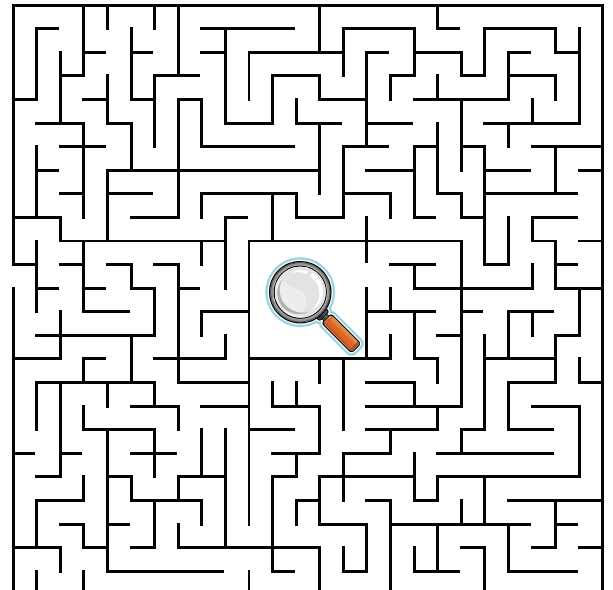
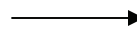
NELSON

PHOEBE

RAYMOND

SWAMP

Help the student find Detective McSmogg's magnifying glass in the maze. Use a pencil, this one is hard!



What Is Missing?

Directions: With a partner, think something you own. Have your partner do the same. Pretend these objects have gone missing. Describe the object without naming it. See if you can guess ("find") your partner's object. Think of another object and play again.

These poems are about students from Miss Nelson's class. Read the poems and write down what the students are doing and why Miss Nelson is proud of them.

*I build one row.
My friend adds the next.
Before too long,
We've made a castle. Impressed?*

What did the students do in this poem?

Why is Miss Nelson proud of them?

*In the library,
I walk past my usual books.
I try one I've never read.
Before long, I'm hooked!*

What did the students do in this poem?

Why is Miss Nelson proud of them?

*Out on the playground,
The new kid's sitting alone.
I introduce her to my friends
And make her feel at home.*

What did the students do in this poem?

Why is Miss Nelson proud of them?

Fun With Disguises:

Miss Nelson has a disguise she wears to become Miss Viola Swamp. Think of some objects and costume pieces you could use for disguises. Draw them in the boxes below.
