



NO FAIR SCIENCE FAIR

Nancy Poydar

GRADES
PRE-3

About the Book

Otis needs a science fair project in a hurry, and luckily a blue jay outside the classroom window provides inspiration.

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SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Language Arts

Read Aloud—This book lends itself perfectly to be read aloud as a kickoff for a class science fair. Students can begin to think about what projects they might like to undertake and, after listening to the story, discuss their ideas.

Recall—After students have heard the story and observed the illustrations, ask them which science projects they remember from the story—either from the text or from the pictures. The last page in the book provides an excellent recap of two dozen projects that were in evidence in the story, along with the page numbers where they appear.

Story Analysis—Otis won the “Stick-with-It Prize” for his bird feeder. Students can write about whether they think he deserved a prize, and why or why not. They can also write about why the quality of perseverance (or “stick-to-it-iveness”) is valuable for a scientist.

Companion Book—Students may also be interested in hearing/reading *The Little Plant Doctor: The Story of George Washington Carver* by Jean Marzollo, illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max (Holiday House, 2011). They can discuss how what George did in this book is similar to what they will do when working on their own science projects.

Science

Scientific Method—What is science? Students can discuss this question, and can then be introduced to the Scientific Method: Observe, Question, Create Hypothesis, Experiment, Record findings, Draw Conclusion. (See Online Resources below for a sample worksheet related to the Scientific Method.)

Birds—Otis decided to do his project on birds. He mentioned several birds that he hoped would come to his bird feeder: cardinals, nuthatches, goldfinches, blue jays, and chickadees. These birds are illustrated in the book, and students can find actual photographs of these birds at the library or on the Internet and compare them with the illustrations.

Interested students might want to find out more information on each type of bird and create an illustrated report to share with the class. Some questions to consider might be: 1) Where do the birds live? 2) What do they eat? 3) Are they an endangered species?

Bird Feeders—Otis made a simple bird feeder using a milk carton, a twig, scissors, paint, string, and sunflower seeds. Students may replicate his project, using the illustrations in the book as a guide, or, depending on grade level, they may choose to make more elaborate bird feeders. (See Online Resources below.)

Planting Seeds—The class can grow a sweet potato, avocado, onion, or garlic plant. Once the seed creates roots and a sprout, students can begin to record the daily progress of the plant. They can create dated, labeled drawings showing the changes in size, color, etc., of both the roots and the sprout. Through observation (and using math), they can begin to project the growth of the plant in a week, a month, a year.

Famous Scientists—Students can use encyclopedias, nonfiction books from the library, and online resources to find information on famous scientists. Some suggestions are: John James Audubon (naturalist/artist), Alexander Graham Bell, Luther Burbank, George Washington Carver,

Copernicus, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Galileo Galilei, Jane Goodall, Edwin Hubble, Isaac Newton, Louis Pasteur, Carl Sagan, and Jonas Salk. Some questions to consider for each scientist are: 1) When did they do their major work? 2) What did they study? 3) What did they discover/invent? 4) How did their work help people?

Culminating Activity—Students could portray the scientists they have researched, describing the work that the students did. On a more complicated level, students could also use pictures of the scientists to create costumes to wear during their presentation. It would be fun to present this to parents or to another class.

Online Resources for NO FAIR SCIENCE FAIR

<http://k6educators.about.com/od/sciencelessonplans/qt/scimethodws.htm>

Presents a worksheet that students can use to practice using the Scientific Method. (Note: There are advertisements on this page.)

www.google.com/imghp

Photographs of all of the birds mentioned in the story are available here. Note that it is necessary to enter “cardinals birds” or “blue jays birds” in order to access photos of actual birds rather than athletic team logos!

<http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/bird-feeders.htm>

This website from The Learning Channel presents instructions for making many different types of bird feeders.

<http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/science-activities-for-kids5.htm>

Presents very simple directions for growing an avocado seed, a sweet potato, an onion, garlic, or an apple. The site also presents replanting instructions.

www.americanbirdguide.com

Presents a wealth of information on birds in America.

www.ala.org/gwstemplate.cfm?section=greatwebsites&template=/cfapps/gws/displaysection.cfm&sec=11

This site created by the American Library Association presents links to many kid-friendly sites that contain biographical information on scientists.

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Author/Illustrator

Nancy Poydar is a former elementary school teacher who is now a full-time author and artist. She lives with her husband in Massachusetts. Visit Nancy online at www.nancypoydar.com.

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