

HOORAY FOR DIFFENDOOFER DAY!



# Teaching Guide for Hooray For Diffendoofer Day!

By Dr. Seuss

With some help from Jack Prelutsky & Lane Smith

Guide written by Stasia Ward Kehoe

## About This Guide

Take a great idea from the inimitable Dr. Seuss, pile on the word wonder of poet Jack Prelutsky, the clever pen of artist Lane Smith, and the wisdom of Seuss's own editor, Janet Schulman, and what do you get? Cause for celebration! *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* is two books in one: a rollicking rhyme about some clever kids and their terrific teachers and a fascinating description of the unique collaboration among some of the most original minds in children's books today.

*Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* is a story about creative teaching and thinking. It is a tale that celebrates originality, difference, and uniqueness. It is a book that lends itself to the lively exploration of a place and an activity that are at the center of young people's lives: school and learning.

This guide contains questions and activities aimed at getting kids to look at things in unique and interesting ways. The hope is to take Dr. Seuss's great message from the storybook page to the classroom, science lab, kitchen, and beyond: Learn to think, and your mind will take you on journeys wild, wonderful and diffendooferous!

## Discussion Topics and Activities: Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!

### What is a school?

The narrator of this story is sure that Diffendoofer School is very different from other schools. Ask your students to define "school" and "learning." What and how are teachers supposed to teach? What is the job of a principal? Do students think that their school is different from other schools in any way? If yes, explain. If no, what is an "ordinary" school? Do your students think that they would like Diffendoofer School? Why or why not?

### Terrific Teachers

Diffendoofer teachers teach some wild and wacky subjects. Inspired by the characters in the story, your students can create their own unique teachers. First, have each child draw a picture of an imaginary teacher at work in the classroom. Next, ask students to caption their drawings with a made-up name, being sure to point out that many of the Diffendoofer teachers and staff have names that hint at what they teach or do. Use the drawings to create a classroom wall display. Invite children to make suggestions and then choose an original name to give the school in which all of the imaginary teachers teach.

### Students as Teachers

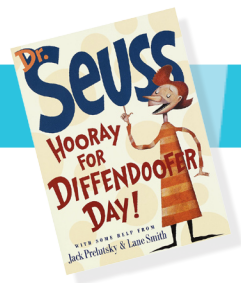
Ask students to complete a survey that contains the following questions:

What is your name?

What is the most interesting thing you know?

How did you learn this?

Do you think you could teach this to other students?



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Collect the survey. Compile and discuss the results with students. Do many children find one subject or idea particularly interesting? How many students feel they could teach what they know? Select three or four of the most interesting (and feasible) surveys and invite the students who completed them to try teaching the class. (Note: To maintain focus and propriety of this exercise, it may be advisable to narrow the scope of question two. For example, consider asking students "What is the most interesting thing you know about sports, about history, or about music?")

### Diffendoofer Taste Delights

At the Diffendoofer School, the three cooks McMunch prepare things "we don't recognize." Ask students to describe the most untypical food they ever tasted. Then help your class prepare a snack of edible flowers; unusual greens, such as chicory and arugula; star kiwi fruit; or other uncommon ingredients. Students may also volunteer to bring in interesting ethnic dishes or foods they enjoy at home to share with the class.

### The Test

Even at Diffendoofer School, students are nervous at the prospect of a difficult test. Create a list of the worst, scariest, most difficult, funniest, and/or best test-taking experiences your students can recall. Have your students help you print the list on a large (at least 4' long) sheet of paper, using a variety of colored markers or crayons. If desired, decorate the list with photographs of kids making — "eek" — terrified test-taking faces. Then ask: "Why do you think the Diffendoofer School students did well on the test?" or "When is a test NOT scary?"

### Collage Creations

The illustrations in this story are a combination of Lane Smith's inventive oil paintings and snippets of Dr. Seuss's original drawings blended together in a type of collage. Invite students to make their own collage creations, inspired by these illustrations.

You will need an assortment of old magazines, safety scissors, white glue, old paintbrushes, pencils, Magic Markers, drawing paper, a stapler, and construction paper.

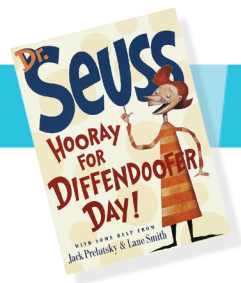
1. Ask each student to cut two or three pictures from the magazines to use in his or her collage. (Note: Students may choose a theme or topic in advance or allow the images in the magazine to inspire them.)
2. Arrange the cutouts on the drawing paper and lightly trace the outlines of the images with a pencil; then set aside.
3. Use pencils to sketch, then markers to complete an original drawing that will contain the magazine cutouts.
4. When the ink is dry, use a paintbrush to apply a little water-diluted white glue to the backside of each clipping, then carefully press onto the drawing paper.
5. Staple completed collage creations onto slightly larger pieces of construction paper to create a colorful "work of art."

Encourage students to expand the boundaries of this activity in such ways as (1) using fabric scraps, photographs, and other items in addition to magazine clippings, (2) using paints, colored pencils, or other media for their original artwork, or (3) decorating the construction paper frame to continue the mood or theme of the collage.

### A Diffendoofer Day Play

*Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* is a rollicking, read-aloud rhyme ideally suited to dramatic choral reading and pantomime dramatization, such as in the presentation described below.

Select students for the parts of the narrator, Miss Bonkers, Mr. Lowe, and the three cooks McMunch. Assign other



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students to portray Miss Bobble, Miss Wobble, Miss Fribble, Miss Quibble, and other non-speaking characters in the story.

Have students stand in a semicircle, with the narrator at one end and Mr. Lowe and Miss Bonkers at the other. As the narrator reads about each character, ask the students playing that role to step forward and perform an appropriate gesture or movement. (For example, Miss Quibble could put her hands around her mouth megaphone-style for a silent pantomime yell.)

Introduce some choral movements for the entire cast to perform. (Examples: When Flobbertown is described, all students can march in place drearily. During the test, all students can pretend to be nervously reading the questions, then slowly begin to grin as they realize that they know the answers to write down.)

Practice singing or chanting “The Diffendoofer Song.” Have students throw their arms joyfully in the air for the three final “hoorays.”

Costume your cast. Ask students to bring in the brightest, craziest, funniest clothes that they can find in their closets to wear and share with their performing classmates.

Show your community how terrific your students can be by performing the Diffendoofer Day play at a senior center, children’s hospital, or other volunteer venue.

## Discussion Topics and Activities: How This Book Came To Be

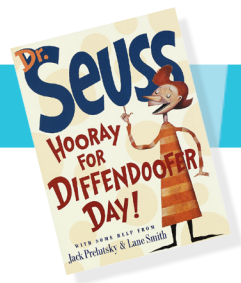
### Rhyme Time

In the second section of the book, readers can see many examples of Dr. Seuss experimenting with rhymes for his story. Writing rhyming poetry is an art, a science-and a lot of hard work. Ask children to try their hand at writing a few rhyming lines. If they get stumped, have them try writing a list of rhyming words or ideas, just as Dr. Seuss did on the pages of his draft of the original Diffendoofer story.

### Found and Finished

“How This Book Came to Be” discusses the “second beginning” of the Diffendoofer Day story — the moment when Dr. Seuss’s editor received the set of sketches for a book that was not complete. The result, years later, was, of course, *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* Ask students how they think Jack Prelutsky, Lane Smith, and Janet Schulman felt when they saw the completed book. Your students can enjoy that same sense of completion with a “Found and Finished” mini-journal. Fold several sheets of drawing paper into a sheet of construction paper and staple along the fold to create a mini-notebook for each student. Students can write “Found and Finished” on the cover. Next, ask students to complete one or more of the following assignments at home. Students should write a description of the assignment, what they found, remembered, or thought of, what they did, and how they felt afterward in their mini-journal.

1. Find an arts-and-crafts project (drawing, sewing kit, model) that you started a while ago and then put aside. Finish it now.
2. Remember a clean-up chore you always forget (clearing the dishes, taking out the garbage, tidying your room) and do it.
3. Think of a nice thing you meant to do (visiting a grandparent, writing a letter) and do it.



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### Great Collaborations

Review the second section of the book, which discusses the way editor Janet Schulman brought together Jack Prelutsky, Lane Smith, and Dr. Seuss's draft book to create *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* This is an example of a great collaboration. Look up the term "collaboration" in the dictionary, then learn more about great collaborations through history, such as Orville and Wilbur Wright (aviation pioneers), Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein (musical theater innovators), Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (explorers), the 1927 New York Yankees (sports team), and James D. Watson and Francis Crick (biologists). What makes a great collaboration? Do all teams work in the same way?

### Collaboration Challenges

Let your students try their hands at collaboration with one of the following activities:

**Cooperative posters:** Divide the class into three-person teams, each team consisting of a researcher/editor, a writer/poet, and an artist. Each team must work together to assemble an educational poster on a topic such as "our town," "summer vacation," "the library," "Dr. Seuss," or "celebrations." The editor researches the topic, the writer composes the text and captions, and the artist contributes drawings, magazine clippings, etc. Together, the team determines the final content, style and title for their poster.

**Double-decker portraits:** Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair a sheet of drawing paper with a vertical fold down the center. Sitting side by side, each member of the team must complete one side of a face: half of the head, hair, mouth and nose, plus one eye, one ear, and one side of special details (hat, earring, mustache, etc.).

**Class mural:** Have students brainstorm, then vote on a subject for their mural, work together to sketch and plan the artwork, and then paint the final piece on a giant sheet of newsprint or, if possible, a more permanent surface. (Contact your local hardware store for information on the most appropriate wall preparation, paints, and safety precautions for your chosen surface.)

**Class teamwork day:** Take your collaborative efforts outside, where students can enjoy group-focused games, such as relay races and tug-of war; contribute to and enjoy a potluck picnic; spend half an hour picking up litter from the playground or a local park; and/or work together planting flowers to beautify the schoolyard.

After completing one or more of the above activities, ask students to discuss what they have learned about the benefits and difficulties of collaborative work. Students may want to compose a class essay on "Cool Collaborations" or "Terrific Teamwork" for the school paper.