



#10091

THE CLOWN OF GOD

WESTON WOODS STUDIOS, 1982

Grade Level: K-3

10 mins.

DESCRIPTION

Giovanni, a poor Italian boy, becomes a juggler with a traveling troupe of entertainers. He spends his life pleasing crowds, doing what he loves best. When he becomes old and penniless, he goes to live in a monastery. On Christmas Eve, Giovanni gives his last and best performance for the Christ child. Based on the American Library Association Notable Book by Tomie dePaola.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Grades K-4 History Topic 4—The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World

- Standard: Understands selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe
 - ◆ Benchmark: Understands the main ideas found in folktales, stories of great heroism, fables, legends, and myths from around the world that reflect the beliefs and ways of living of various cultures in times past (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1 and 2.)

Subject Area: Behavioral Studies

- Standard: Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance, and physical development affect human behavior
 - ◆ Benchmark: Understands that practice helps people to improve, and that how well a person learns sometimes depends on how she or he does it as well as how often and how hard she or he tries to learn (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 3.)

Subject Area: Language Arts—Reading

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
 - ◆ Benchmark: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of familiar literary passages and texts (e.g., fairy tales, folktales, fiction, nonfiction, legends, fables, myths, poems, nursery rhymes, picture books, predictable books) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To explore Italian culture.
2. To learn about religious beliefs.
3. To illustrate the importance of hard work and perseverance.
4. To promote the reading of children's literature.

VOCABULARY

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|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. brother (monk) | 7. God |
| 2. cheer | 8. juggle |
| 3. clap | 9. laugh |
| 4. clown | 10. monastery |
| 5. costume | 11. play/players (acting) |
| 6. crowd | 12. rainbow |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Read *The Clown of God* by Tomie dePaola. Review the characters and plot. Discuss the clothing styles and compare to current clothing.
2. Locate Italy on a map or globe. Point out how far it is from your location. Discuss various foreign languages, including Italian. Share common foreign words.
3. Discuss jugglers. Share personal experiences of watching jugglers.
 - a. What was the juggler juggling?
 - b. Did the juggler ever miss?
 - c. How did you feel watching the juggler perform?
 - d. Would you like to be a juggler? Why or why not?



AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Describe the kind of life that Giovanni had at the beginning of the story.
2. What was the wonderful thing that Giovanni could do?
3. What did Giovanni want to do when he saw the traveling troupe perform?
4. Who did he talk to after the show? How did Giovanni respond when the maestro told him no? How did he convince the maestro to let him join the troupe?
5. What might have happened if Giovanni had given up when the maestro told him no?
6. What did he do before he started juggling at his performances?
7. List all the things he juggled. Describe his juggling act with the colored balls.
8. Discuss why Giovanni set off on his own. (Remember that the maestro refused to pay him.) Where did he go? How did his appearance change? Who did he perform for?

9. How did the crowds of people respond when Giovanni performed his juggling act? Discuss how Giovanni felt when the crowds clapped and cheered.
10. Who did Giovanni share his lunch with one day? What did the brothers believe? Why was this scene important to the story?
11. Describe what happened to Giovanni when he became old.
12. Why did Giovanni go to the monastery church? What special day was it the next day? How did the people celebrate Christmas?
13. Why did Giovanni juggle for the picture of Mary and the Christ child? What happened after this performance?

Applications and Activities

1. Invite a guest who can juggle to perform for the class. Attempt to juggle. Start with scarves. Then try small plastic balls. Discuss the juggling experience.
 - a. Is it easy to juggle? Why or why not? Do you like having people watch you try to juggle?
 - b. How would it feel to juggle in front of a large audience?
 - c. What helped the juggler in the story get better at juggling?
2. Investigate Italy and Italian culture. Share information learned.
3. Explain that people have many different kinds of religious beliefs. Discuss religious beliefs as appropriate for your school.
 - a. Review what the brothers told Giovanni when they met the first time.
 - b. Share personal religious beliefs.
 - c. Consider how personal beliefs are similar and different to the brothers' religious beliefs and to their classmates' beliefs.
4. Describe skills that have been developed over time, such as riding bikes, playing the piano, or playing sports. Discuss the importance of hard work and perseverance.
 - a. How well did you do this when you began learning?
 - b. What helped you to improve?
 - c. How did you feel when you did this well?
 - d. Did you ever feel like giving up?
 - e. What made you decide to keep trying?
 - f. Were you glad you kept trying? Why?
5. Research how rainbows are formed.
6. Investigate how Christmas is celebrated in a variety of other countries and cultures.



SUMMARY

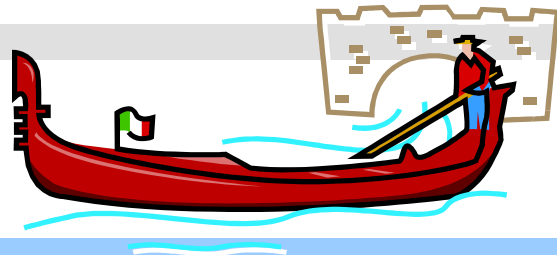
The Clown of God takes place in the Italian town of Sorrento, where a young boy begs for bread and juggles for pleasure. When a group of wandering entertainers comes to the boy's town, the boy begs to be included in the show as a juggler. Soon the boy is introducing the show with his juggling and pleasing crowds wherever he performs.

Time goes on and the boy grows older. At one point in his travels, the young juggler meets two brothers of a religious order who tell him that his work is the

work of God. As the juggler gets older, his juggling ability is lessened, and people no longer enjoy him the way they did in his early days. The juggler, now an elderly man, decides to "go home" by journeying to the monastery where he can live out his days. Once there, he arrives in time for the celebration of the birthday of the Christ child. As a gift, the juggler performs for the child, who is seen in a picture on the lap of his mother. The child appears sad to the juggler, and the juggler determines to make him happy. When the juggler finishes his performance, his heart stops beating. The brothers who come and find him discover that the Christ child is now pictured with a smiling face, holding one of the juggler's golden balls.

CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [Charlie Needs a Cloak #10049](#)
- [Max's Christmas #2312](#)



World Wide Web

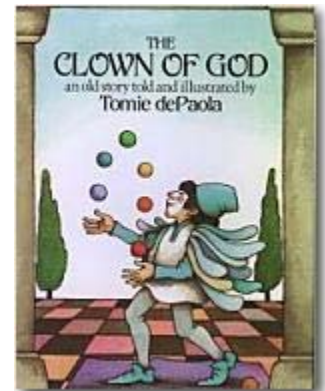


The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

• THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF TOMIE DEPAOLA

<http://www.tomie.com/main.html>

This author Web site includes general information about Tomie dePaola, resources that include coloring pages; book information, including new releases; a bibliography; and a "spotlight" section on one of his books. There is also a section called "Being an Artist" that includes a monthly column written by dePaola, as well as information on his creative process.



• HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD: WINTER HOLIDAYS

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/holidays/index.asp>

This site explores the history of and similarities between the world's major holidays. Also includes a section on holiday symbols, a holiday greeting exchange, and a quiz.

- **RESOURCES FOR WINTER HOLIDAYS**

<http://www.waterborolibrary.org/christm.htm>

This Waterboro Public Library Web site holds a multitude of links for winter holidays that include Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Winter Solstice. Each area contains subheadings with many links to more information.

- **JUGGLING INFORMATION SERVICE**

<http://www.juggling.org>

This Web site serves the Internet juggling community by connecting juggling-related resources. It includes help for people learning to juggle, photos, cartoons, links to other juggling Web sites, and more.



- **TOUR OF ITALY FOR THE FINANCIALLY CHALLENGED**

<http://touritaly.org>

This Web site contains a number of photo tours of different places in Italy, along with current news, weather, and a database of articles about Italy. Although it's geared for adults, this site should have some value for younger students.
