

# GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE

## GIRAFFES CAN'T DANCE

by Giles Andreae, illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees

Ages: 4-8

Lexile®: AD450L; Guided Reading Level: L

Themes: Acceptance, Bullies, Creativity, Music, Poetry, Self-Confidence

### SUMMARY

Gerald the giraffe has a body that's perfect for standing still and eating the shoots from tall trees, but when it comes to dancing, his legs are just too skinny and his neck is just too long. He never feels more awkward than the night of the big Jungle Dance when all of the animals convene to show off their moves. The warthogs waltz, the lions tango, and the chimpanzees do the cha-cha. When Gerald finally gets the nerve to try the dance floor himself, all the animals jeer and ridicule his attempts, telling him, "Giraffes can't dance!" It takes the encouragement of a small friend and a different kind of music for Gerald to find his own rhythm. This story will inspire both children and adults to take risks and maybe even dance by the light of the moon themselves!

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will discuss acceptance and friendship.
- Students will make text-to-self connections.
- Students will listen and dance to different types of music.

### BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Brainstorm with students about activities, sports, and arts that they enjoy and are good at. Create a list entitled, "We love..." or "We are amazing at..." Then, challenge students to pick from the list or think of another activity, sport, or art that they dislike or feel like they're not good at. Open a conversation between the students about why they dislike this activity or don't feel like they're good at it. Record their responses. Summarize the discussion by talking to students about how we often don't enjoy activities that we don't get to practice very often. Encourage students to take a risk to try to do one something that is difficult for them. Tell them that the character in the program that they

are about to see takes a risk like this and finds that he can do what he thought he couldn't.

Have the students listen to different genres of music, from classical, to rock, to jazz, to Latin, to swing, to country. For each type of music, help students identify and describe how the music makes them feel. Compile these results, keeping a tally chart of how many people like each type of music. For each genre of music, make a poster that says: "Jazz makes us feel..." Record the students' responses on the poster. Discuss with students how the same music can have different effects on different people. Encourage students to listen for the same genres of music in the program.

### AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Lead a discussion with students about acceptance and friendship. First, generate a list of students' ideas about what makes a good friend. Then, have students recall the actions of the animals in the story. Were they good friends to Gerald? Why or why not? What did the cricket do that was different from the other animals? How did the animals' opinions of Gerald change by the end of the book? After students' ideas have been shared, talk with students about ways that they can behave to support and accept each other. End the discussion with a team-building activity. Team-building ideas:

- Mix-Pair-Share: Pose a question, such as, what is your favorite restaurant/book/movie/type of music/sport? Students walk silently and randomly around the room to music. When the music stops, they give a high five to a student standing near them. Anyone who cannot find a partner keeps his/her hand raised and the teacher assists in pairing up remaining students. Students then have one minute for both people to share their answer to the question. After a minute, students give each other one compliment (with younger children, provide the compliment, i.e. "You are very smart!"). Then students mix again to the music and repeat the process.
- Pass the Hula Hoop: Students join hands in a circle and must pass a hula hoop around the circle without disjoining hands. If they are successful, add another hula

hoop or time them and let them race against themselves.

Have students make text-to-self connections with the story by filling in the cloze sentence: I felt like Gerald when \_\_\_\_\_ . Underneath the sentence, students should illustrate the experience they had when they didn't feel confident in an activity or situation. Have students share their sentences and drawings and then ask them what happened next. Did they keep trying? Did they walk away? Have they ever tried the activity again?

Replay the music that students listened to in the Before Viewing Activity. This time, invite students to dance to the different types of music. Before starting the activity, establish a set of ground rules with the class that will help students feel more comfortable. Recall the characters from the story who hurt Gerald's feelings and remind students that they don't want to imitate their behavior. If any shyer students are still hesitant to participate, reassure them and enlist their help with another aspect of the activity. Once the students have listened to and danced to a variety of music, conclude the activity by having them share how they felt while dancing to different types of music. Was there any music that they felt much more comfortable and confident dancing to than the others? Was there any music that was very difficult to dance to?

### OTHER WESTON WOODS PRODUCTIONS ABOUT CONFIDENCE AND CREATIVITY INCLUDE:

**The Dot**, by Peter H. Reynolds

**Ish**, by Peter H. Reynolds

**Musical Max**, by Robert Kraus, ill. by Jose Aruego

**Roberto the Insect Architect**, by Nina Laden

**Shrinking Violet**, by Cari Best, ill. by Giselle Potter

**The Ugly Duckling**, by Hans Christian Andersen, adapted and ill. by Jerry Pinkney

**Will I Have A Friend?** by Miriam Cohen, ill. by Lillian Hoban

**To order other Weston Woods productions call 1-800-243-5020**

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction