

Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade

AUTHOR: Melissa Sweet

ILLUSTRATOR: Melissa Sweet

PUBLISHER: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children

COPYRIGHT DATE: 2011

ART MEDIUM: gouache, collage, and mixed media

GENRE: Biography

LIFE SKILLS: Personal best, effort, initiative, perseverance, problem solving, resourcefulness

SYNOPSIS: This is the story of Tony Sarg who started making puppet displays in the windows of Macy's Department Store in New York City. These wonderful displays attracted the attention of many shoppers but Macy's did not stop there. They had a bigger project in store for Sarg. He was asked to develop the 1st Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1924. *Balloons Over Broadway* tells the story of how Tony Sarg created the massive floating balloons for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

BOOKTALK: Who here has ever been to a parade? Have you ever wondered how they make the huge floating balloons?

The parade started in 1924 with real live animals from the Central Park Zoo. After scaring many children, the live animals were replaced with the floating puppets that we know today. Learn the making of these wonderful creations by Tony Sarg and enjoy celebrating this American tradition brought to life by Author/Illustrator Melissa Sweet.

Author/Illustrator:

Melissa Sweet

Melissa is the author and illustrator for over 100 children books. One of her books, *The Story of William Carlos Williams*, won a Caldecott Honor. Her paintings have also appeared in many important areas, such as the New York Times, and Martha Stewart Living.

Other books written by the author:

- Tupelo Rides the Rails
- A River of Words
- Baby Bear's Big Dreams
- Day is Done
- Easy as Pie

CHALLENGING WORDS:

marionette, pulleys, mechanical, jostling, immigrants, traditions, costumes, sketches, articulate, gesture, helium, deflated, flounced, sallied, rigged, blimp, Indonesian, tethering, shimmied

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (Please include 4-6 questions)

- 1 What are some words you could use to describe Tony Sarg?
- 2 Imagine you are a child at Macy's first parade in 1923. What would you be thinking and feeling?
- 3 What are some ways Tony had to use problem solving?
- 4 If you could make a gigantic balloon, what would it be?
- 5 Tony Sarg's childhood love was figuring things out. What do you like to figure out?
- 6 Sarg is often compared to Jim Henson who invented the Muppets. Look at a video or clip of the Muppets or Sesame Street and discuss what makes the puppets work.
- 7 The author/illustrator of this book describes the artwork she used to make the pictures for *Balloons Over Broadway* as collage. What is a collage and how is it made?
- 8 Tony Sarg made the balloons out of rubber and helium. What do you know about helium?

ACTIVITIES with CORE STANDARDS:

Language Arts:

Write a newspaper article about the balloons, parade, or Tony Sarg that may have appeared in 1924.

- **W.K.2.** Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what

they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

- **W.1.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.
- **W.2.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

1) What is the main topic of this book? Can you tell some important details in the story?

1.RI.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

Math activities, include Core Standards

1 When Tony was a young boy he invented a way to feed his chickens without getting out of bed. Look at the clock in the book and write down what time it was when Tony's alarm went off to feed the chickens. What time is it on the clock shown in the Wondertown window display?

The book states that The Macy's parade begins at 2:00 pm on Thanksgiving Day. Draw a picture of a clock showing 2:00.

MD.3 Tell and write time in hours and half-hours using analog and digital clocks.

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

Melissa Sweet says that a great day is riding a bike to a library. When she is not doing that she is creating art and books in Rockport, Maine. She has authored and illustrated too many books to list but you can see them all at

<http://melissasweet.net>

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