

Reviewed by Jody Petter

Moo!

Written by David LaRochelle
 Illustrated by Mike Wahnoutka
 New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2013

Moo! takes readers on a wild ride when a cow steals a farmer's car. Author David LaRochelle's simple words and story line will appeal to readers of any age, and the theme of making good and bad choices, as well as the value of telling the truth, will resonate with all.

The story unfolds from the perspective of the cow, whose only word appears on every page. Thus, the book must be read aloud, with voice inflection on every "moo" to encourage inference of the cow's adventures. Mike Wahnoutka's colorful, engaging illustrations further stimulate the imagination as readers experience the excitement of the excursion, both visually and aurally.

The story begins when the cow spots the farmer setting a "for sale" sign on his car and decides to take it for a spin through the countryside. As she ventures up and down hills, the car picks up speed and on a curvy path it veers out of control and soars through the air, crash-landing on a police car. The cow proceeds to explain to the police officer how it all happened, but all she can say is "moo," and the officer sends her home. As she plods back through the hills, she mutters (or udders) her moo-regret. In a twist ending, when confronted by the farmer—hands on hips, giving her "the look"—the cow speaks a new word, a guilty "baaa," as she points to a sheep and tries to blame him.

Music teachers can explore the many wonderful connections this book offers, with activities such as those my students have enjoyed:

Intonation. Read through the story with emphasis on changing melodic direction to convey the meaning of the page. How does pitch change the meaning of the words?

My favorite example is having students say, "I'm sorry," and explore the many meanings behind it.

Social-Emotional. Identifying and labeling emotions is a great way to develop emotional sensitivity. How does the cow's face reflect the emotion of what is illustrated on the page? Can you act out that emotion? At the end of the story does the cow make good choices? Predict an ending for the cow—will she have a consequence or not? How do you think she feels?

Pitch Exploration. Have students draw their own road for the cow to drive on. What obstacles will she encounter? Perform with voice, recorders, and other pitched instruments. With older students I like to use alto recorders, changing the amount of air used to make the sounds for the cow going up and down the hills. With younger students, we use our voices to change the melodic direction and follow a leader. You can also invite students to make maps for others or a large class picture for all to follow.

Play. Choose or compose simple melodies to create songs for the story. Have improvisatory conversations with students using puppets and only the word "moo." Transfer the "o" of moo to the staff to make connections of melodic direction.

Whether you use your imagination and that of your students to expand upon these activities or choose to create your own, be prepared for all to enjoy a "moo-velous" time with *Moo!* ■

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