

Discussion Guide for “The Talent Show”

Michelle Edwards

www.michelledwards.com

The Talent Show

Michelle Edwards, Author and Illustrator

Teachers, librarians, and parents, feel free to choose from the questions below, all of which prepare the readers for the ideas brought forth in the book.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Does your school have a talent show?
2. Have you ever performed in a talent show? What was your special talent?
3. Do you know what bagpipes are? Have you ever heard them played? [[Bagpipe music is available to listen to online.](#)] Someone will be playing bagpipes at the Talent Show.
4. Have you ever bowed to an audience? Have you practiced your bow? [This might be a good time for a demonstration of bowing and curtseying, depending on the reaction of your kids or students.]
5. How many middle names do you have? Do you know anyone who has four middle names?
6. Have you ever looked forward to doing something so, so, so much, for days and weeks, and then when it came you weren't sure you wanted to do it anymore? Or maybe you were scared to do it. What was your experience like?



While Reading the Book

1. [After page 24] What do you think happened to Howie? Why couldn't she sing?
2. [After page 36] Now Howie feels much better about her singing. She knows she can still do it—and the squirrel and the crow liked it. Will she be able to sing for Opening Night? How will she get over her fears?

After Reading the Book

1. What kind of things make you afraid? Let's name some of them.
2. Have you heard about stage fright before? Have you ever been on a stage? Was it different than what you expected?
3. Are you sometimes afraid of talking or singing or acting in front of people? Have you talked with your brother, sister, mom, dad, grandpa, or grandma about ways to get past your fear?
4. Did you predict one of the ways Howie used to get over her stage fright?
5. Why do you think Stinky Stern is so mean? Why does he make unkind remarks to the Jackson Friends? Do you have any ideas?
6. Why do you think Howie has so many middle names?
7. Do you think Howie will try out for The Talent Show next year?



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About the Illustrations (visual literacy)

Michelle Edwards not only wrote the Jackson Friends series, but she also illustrated and designed the series. We can see a lot of the glamour at Jackson Magnet School for the Talent Show and we can also see the loving household where Howie spends time with Grandma Gardenia.

1. On page 7, what do you notice about the television which shows Howie’s glitzy picture? What do you think it means that the television is not plugged in?
2. On page 22, Howie is drawn with an empty “word balloon” over her head. Why is this?
3. Looking at page 29, which star do you believe belongs to which of the Jackson Friends? Which one is Calliope’s? Which one is Pa Lia’s? Which one is Howie’s?

Learning about the illustrations from Michelle Edwards

The dummy of “*The Talent Show*” was set up in Microsoft Publisher so could abandon my old method of text wrapping, which was to print the words, cut them out, and paste them on the paper around the spot artwork. They look like ransom notes because we couldn’t get the type to line up.

“Because I had to scan in and clean up the images in Microsoft Paint first, before text wrapping, I was tempted to fool around a bit with the image and develop it further by drawing with my mouse in MS Paint. It was great fun working with the images on the computer and developing them in stages and proofing was very much the way I had always worked on my art from my printmaking days.”

Unfamiliar illustration terms?

Microsoft Paint Computer software that works like a canvas with paint, ink, or crayons to draw an image or painting.

Microsoft Publisher Computer software that is used to lay out pages of a document with text blocks and graphic images.

text wrapping The illustrator adds text to a page, fitting is just right so that it reads easily and doesn’t distract from, or hide, the illustration.

proofing A stage of the drawing, printed out on paper, so you can see what it looks like off the computer screen.

scanning Using an electronic device to transfer an image from a printed page to a computer’s hard drive, so it can be used in computer software.



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About Michelle Edwards

Michelle Edwards writes and illustrates children's books. Her newest books are *Stinky Stern Forever* and *Papa's Latkes*, the fourth book in the Jackson Friends series. Michelle turned fifty years old on January 25, 2005. She was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut and grew up in Troy, New York. Michelle has studied, lived, and worked in Jerusalem, Israel. Her children and her children's books were born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Michelle now lives in Iowa City, Iowa with her husband Rody and their three daughters Meera, Flory, and Lelia.

The Talent Show

is a part of the *Jackson Friends Series*



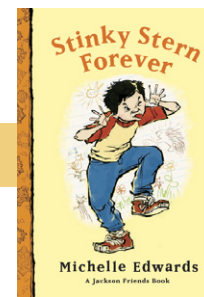
Pa Lia's First Day
Harcourt 1999
ISBN 0-15-205748-X



Zero Grandparents
Harcourt 2001
ISBN 0-15-205754-4



The Talent Show
Harcourt 2002
ISBN 0-15-205760-9



Stinky Stern Forever
Harcourt 2005
ISBN 0-15-216389-1



Michelle Edwards is available for school visits and conference presentations. For more information please visit her website at www.michelledwards.com or send an e-mail to michelle@michelledwards.com.



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