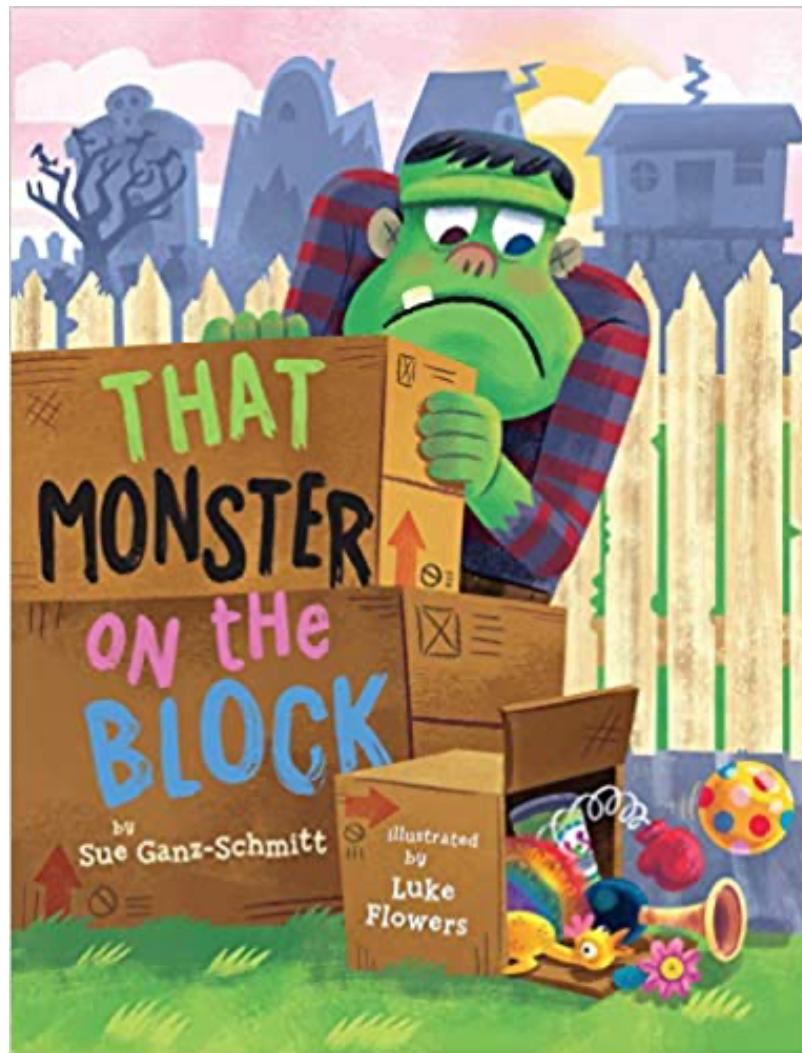


# That Monster on the Block

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen  
based on the picture book written by Sue Ganz-Schmitt  
and illustrated by Luke Flowers



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## **Meet the Author – Sue Ganz-Schmitt**

Sue Ganz-Schmitt was born on the Fourth of July and grew up in Sherman Oaks, California. She now lives in the mountains of Los Angeles with her husband, two daughters, and three dogs. She is the author of many picture books, including the popular *Planet Kindergarten* and *Planet Kindergarten: 100 Days in Orbit*, both illustrated by Shane Prigmore. Sue is the cofounder of a children’s musical theater program, a philanthropist, and a space enthusiast. She has traveled to China to help medically challenged orphans and set up a birthing clinic in rural India. She holds an MFA in writing for children and young adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Learn more at [www.sueganzschmitt.com](http://www.sueganzschmitt.com).

## **Meet the Illustrator –Luke Flowers**

Luke Flowers is the illustrator of more than fifty children’s books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* with poems by Fred Rogers and Disney’s *The Muppet Christmas Carol* storybook. Growing up, Mister Rogers and Kermit the Frog were two characters that inspired his dream to become an artist, so these were milestone books to bring to life. He is also both the author and illustrator of the Moby Shinobi series. Luke grew up with a love for all things Halloween and classic monster movies, and although he’s never been a clown, Luke does enjoy puppeteering, playing banjo, and having wacky adventures with his family. He lives with his wife and three children in Colorado Springs. Learn more about his story, books, and art at [www.lukeflowers.com](http://www.lukeflowers.com).

## **Meet the Curriculum Writer – Marcie Colleen**

This guide was created by Marcie Colleen, a former teacher with a BA in English Education from Oswego State and a MA in Educational Theater from NYU. In addition to creating curriculum guides for children’s books, Marcie can often be found writing books of her own at home in San Diego, California. Visit Marcie at [www.thisismarciecolleen.com](http://www.thisismarciecolleen.com).

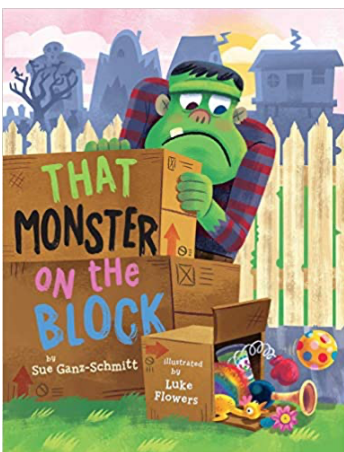
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## How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *That Monster on the Block* is designed for students in kindergarten through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *That Monster on the Block* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.



### **THAT MONSTER ON THE BLOCK**

**Reading level: Ages 4-8**

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Monster is excited to see what kind of creature will move into Vampire's old house on the block. He even starts practicing his welcome growl for the new neighbor.

But when the moving truck pulls up, it's not a greedy goblin, an ogre, or a dastardly dragon that steps out. Instead, it's something even more terrifying than Monster could have imagined!

Monster quickly rallies the other neighbors to unite against the new guy on the block. But what if the new neighbor isn't exactly as bad as Monster thinks?

Join Monster as he confronts his fears in this charming and lighthearted look at what it means to accept others who are different from us.

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# English Language Arts

## **Reading Comprehension**

Before reading *That Monster on the Block*, help students identify the basic parts of a picture book: jacket, front cover, back cover, title page, spine, end papers, and jacket flap.

### The Front Cover

- Describe what you see. Who do you think the character is? What is the character doing?
- Describe what the character is looking at.
- Stand up and pretend to be the character in the illustration. Pay close attention to the facial expression and body shape of the character. How do you think this character feels? How does this pose make you feel?

### The Title Page

- Describe who and what you see. Pay close attention to details.
- What can you say about the setting of *That Monster on the Block* based on the title page illustration?

Now read or listen to the book. Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- Describe Vampire's old house in your own words.
- Why do you think Monster looks happy about someone moving into Vampire's old house?
- What kind of new neighbor would Monster like? Why?
- Before Monster sees his new neighbor, name FIVE hints that his neighbor might be different than he imagined.
- How does Monster react when he sees that his new neighbor is Clown?
- What surprises does Clown leave for his new neighbors? What does Monster do with his gift?
- Clown gives his house a makeover. Name at least THREE changes he makes to the house.
- Do you see any hints in the neighborhood meeting that others might not be as upset about Clown as Monster? If so, what?
- What is Monster's plan to get rid of Clown?
- How does Clown act like a good neighbor to the others?
- What does Monster find when he gets to Clown's house?
- Why does Monster decide to give Clown a chance?

- Look closely at the illustration when Monster calls Clown to invite him to Sunday's sludgeberry scones and tea. What are two indications that Monster and Clown are now good friends? Look closely!
- Who is the next new neighbor and how does the neighborhood react?

Let's talk about the people who made *That Monster on the Block*:

- Who are the authors? Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let's look closely at the illustrations.

- Check out some of the following details that Luke Flowers includes. Can you find:
  - A rubber chicken
  - A monster hiding in the sewer
  - A hat with a purple flower on it
  - A skull telephone
  - A cup of Pharaoh Joe's coffee
  - An ice house
  - A sneaky snake
  - A banana peel
  - A two-headed cat
  - A green umbrella
  - Two sleeping bats
  - A red spider
  - A purple unicorn
  - A three-eyed teddy bear
  - A cheery popcorn machine

## Writing Activities

### What Happened? ~ *That Monster on the Block's* Plot

Help students define the plot arc within *That Monster on the Block*.

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>End</b>
<p>"Somebody was moving into Vampire's old house today."</p> <p>Enter problem: "...out popped Monster's new neighbor!"</p>	<p>Working to solve the conflict.</p> <p>Describe how Monster tries to solve the conflict of Clown being his neighbor.</p> <p>The Climax, when everything changes or becomes out of control/heightened...</p> <p>"You're all hanging around with Clown?!"</p>	<p>They all lived happily ever after.</p>

**BONUS:** Using the basic plot structure above, create an original story about Monster's neighborhood. Students can work individually or as a class.

- Monster isn't feeling well and needs tender loving care.
- The neighborhood looks to build a community garden.
- It's Monster's birthday.

Art center ~ Provide a variety of art materials including crayons, pencils, markers, paint, scissors, colored paper, old magazines, and glue for students to illustrate the scenes in their stories.

Drama center ~ Provide puppets, costumes, and props so students can recreate their new stories.

### Who is Monster? ~ Character Study

How a character acts and what a character says can tell readers a lot about who the character is.

Read *That Monster on the Block* paying close attention to the character of Monster. Scene by scene, record your thoughts, in a chart like the one below.

What he does	Why do you think he does what he does?	How would you describe him?	What might he say?
Example: Monster imagines all the fun new neighbors who might be moving in.	He likes meeting new friends.	Curious, imaginative	"I wonder who is going to move into Vampire's old house."

After gathering information regarding Monster's character, use the scenarios below to write a new scene for *That Monster on the Block*. What would Monster do and say in one of the following situations?

- It's Halloween and Monster is planning a party.
- Monster is asked to babysit for Mummy.
- There is a storm and Clown's tent blows over.

### **Critical Thinking**

In fiction stories, a character usually changes in some way. Do you think Monster changed in the story? How? (*analyzing, inferring, giving support to an idea*)

How would the story be different if Monster had not given Clown a chance? (*predicting, cause and effect*)

What do you think is the message of this story? (*empathy, kindness, friendship, it's ok to be different*)



## **Clown's Point of View**

Either as a class or individually, explore *That Monster on the Block* from the point of view of Clown. Why does Clown move into Vampire's old house? Where did Clown used to live? How does Clown feel about being in a new neighborhood? Why do you think Clown gives surprises to everyone?

Advanced classes will be able to re-create *That Monster on the Block* from Clown's point of view. However, the non-advanced class can simply create captions and thought-bubbles for Clown.

*Additional Challenge:* Try writing thought-bubbles for all the characters in *That Monster on the Block*.

## **My New Neighbor Clown**

Clown certainly brings something new to the neighborhood.

Have the students write a story placing themselves in the neighborhood with the other monsters and Clown. What kind of house would they live in? What are some adventures they would have with their new neighbors?

Each story should include a beginning, a middle with the neighbors in 3 different situations, and an ending.

*Optional:* Create the story together as a class.

## **"Give Him a Chance." ~ Letters of Apology**

Monster is not nice to Clown in the beginning of *That Monster on the Block*, but soon learns that differences can add fun to the neighborhood.

Using a moment from *That Monster on the Block* as inspiration, write a letter of apology to Clown. The letter should include

- a brief re-cap of the situation,
- an apology for what happened,
- a reason why Monster acted that way,
- a solution to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Emphasis can be placed on the proper form of letter writing and the parts of a letter.

*Further Activity:* Have students write letters of apology to someone they didn't treat nicely.

## Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *That Monster on the Block* to life in your classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills!

### Choral Reading

- Using the text of *That Monster on the Block*, read the book aloud together. Emphasize memorization, as well as good vocal expression.
- Read the *That Monster on the Block* Reader's Theater script aloud together. Emphasize memorization of the students' parts as well as good vocal expression.

### Mime

- While the teacher reads the book aloud, students can act out the events in the book. Students can choose which character they wish to play. Emphasize body motion and facial expressions, as well as listening skills. Switch roles and read the book again.

### Drama

Without making noise, students act out their favorite scene from *That Monster on the Block*. Ask the rest of the class to guess which scene they are acting out.

- Create a TV commercial to encourage people to read *That Monster on the Block*.

## Math

### Word Problems

*For younger students, the use of pictures or props can be helpful in figuring out word problems. Note to teachers: Use the word problems below as inspiration to write your own, based on the illustrations in That Monster on the Block or any other book of study.*

The "Clown couldn't stay down for long" illustration:

- 1) How many bats do you see?  
On a piece of paper, draw 2 bats.  
Draw 4 more bats.  
How many bats are there now?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

What if 3 bats flew away? How many bats would you see?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} - \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

The "Out popped a unicorn" illustration:

2) How many sludgeberry scones do you see?

On a piece of paper, draw 5 sludgeberry scones.

Draw 3 more sludgeberry scones.

How many scones do you have?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

What if 4 scones were gobbled up? How many sludgeberry scones would be left?

Write the equation:  $\underline{\quad} - \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$

## Under Where? Spatial Sense

*Spatial concepts* (a category of basic concepts) define the relationship between us and objects, as well as the relationships of objects to each other.

Look at the "Clown couldn't stay down long" spread in *That Monster on the Block*. Use spatial concept words, such as ***in front of, behind, next to, over, under, between, in, on,*** etc. to describe where things appear in the illustration.

Describe where Clown is.

[examples: in front of the house, behind the fence, next to the tent.]

Describe where the giant gold star is.

[example: on the tent, above the rainbow. Under the red ball.]

Describe where house's front door is.

[examples: up the stairs, between the trees, under the windows.]

Have students pick another illustration in *That Monster on the Block* and discuss where things are spatially within that illustration.

Now look around your classroom.

- Describe where your desk sits.
- Describe where your teacher is sitting or standing.
- Describe where the chalkboard/whiteboard is.
- Describe where the clock is.
- Describe where the door is.
- Can you describe where anything else is?

## Science

### **Make Your Own Monster House**

Each student should bring from home one item found in the recycling bin (plastic bottles, tin cans, milk cartons, newspaper, etc).

Using all the items and some additional art supplies, create their own house in Monster's neighborhood which can be displayed in the classroom.

### **Build a Big Top Challenge**

Every circus school needs a big top tent and Clown gets to work constructing one outside his new house.

This challenge allows students to test out the Scientific Method for themselves as they problem solve a way to build their own big top tent out of toothpicks, marshmallows, and napkin/tissue! Of course, a little imagination is going to go a long way here, too!

Step 1: Ask a Question

Step 2: Do Research

Step 3: Guess an Answer (also called a Hypothesis)

Step 4: Test Your Guess/Hypothesis

Step 5: Did it Work? Could it Be Better? Try Again

Step 6: Draw a Conclusion

Step 7: Write a Written Report of Your Results

Step 8: Retest

- Provide the students with several toothpicks, tissue or napkins, and mini marshmallows. Additional craft items can be used to enhance or decorate the finished circus tents. Check the recycling for other ideas of materials.
- Each circus must:
  - Use the assigned materials: toothpicks, marshmallows, and tissue/napkin.
  - Be a construction, not merely a napkin with a peak folded in it.
  - Be self-standing and able to cover at least 3 small figurines like LEGO figures (or some other item of your choosing).
- Create an eight-page Scientific Notebook to carefully document the use of the Scientific Method throughout the process of building the circus tent.

Did the design work? Retest? If they didn't work, head back to the drawing board like a real inventor.

Offer up awards to increase the competition.

- Biggest Big Top
- Most Circus-Like Big Top
- Most Materials Big Top
- Least Materials Big Top

## Social Studies

### **Inclusion, Exclusion, and Building Empathy**

Do you think Clown should be ashamed that he is different from his neighbors?

Look at the situation from Clown's perspective. How would you feel being different?

What are the many ways that Clown tries to fit in with the others? Can you think of other ways to help Clown?

- Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in like Clown?
- What makes you feel better?
- How did Clown reach out to the others?
- How is Clown different from his neighbors?
- What makes you different from your friends or classmates?
- What makes you the same as your friends or classmates?
- Do you ever treat people differently because they look or act different than you? Why?
- Have you been treated differently because you look different than other people? Was this treatment positive or negative?

- How do you want to be treated by your classmates, friends and family?
- How should we act towards others?
- In what situations is it necessary to treat others differently than the way you want to be treated? (*others sometimes have different preferences than you*)
- Who do you think Monster's friends are?
- What makes a good friend?
- What do you look for in a friend?
- What kinds of things do you do for your friends?
- Are you only kind to your friends?
- Do you help others even when they are not your friends?
- Provide an example of when you helped someone you didn't know. Did this make you feel good?
- How do you expect others to respond when you complete an act of kindness for them?
- What obligation do you have to help others?

### **What Makes a Good Friend?**

Discuss what makes a good friend. Draw upon examples from their own friendships and create a list describing what makes a good friend.

Example: Good friends...

- Are reliable.
- Do kind things for one another and use kind language.
- Help out when a friend is sad or has a problem.
- Like to spend time together.
- Have fun with one another.

Look closely at *That Monster on the Block*. How does Clown demonstrate being a good friend?

As a class, create an action plan on how to be a good friend.

### **Finding Commonalities/Uniqueness**

Clown is different from the others in the neighborhood, but he stays true to himself. Although Clown is different, the neighbors are alike in a lot of ways.

Finding what you have in common with other people is a good way to start a meaningful relationship. Here is a way to learn what you have in common with your classmates, while also celebrating what makes each of you unique.

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- This activity can be done as a whole class or in pairs.
- On one sheet of paper, you will have ten minutes to come up with a list of things in common. Completely obvious answers such as “we both have hair” or “we are both in \_\_\_\_\_ class” are not allowed!
- After ten minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have ten minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to only one person.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

## **Sharing Your Culture with Others**

One thing that makes us unique is our different cultures, food, and languages. One way to celebrate our differences is to share them with others.

Monster, Mummy, Yeti, Zombie, and Clown all come from different cultures, eat different foods, and speak different languages. However, Clown quickly introduces his circus-related culture to the others through his circus school. And Monster shares sludgeberry swirl scones with all his friends.

What are some of your culture’s foods or traditions that you can share with your fellow students?

Host a party celebrating these differences!

## **Proud to Be Me**

Monster doesn’t like Clown because he looks so different from his other neighbors. But Monster soon learns that being different can be good. And that judging others on their appearances is not nice. People are so much more than how they look.

The Project:

- Have each student lay down on a large piece of paper while someone traces their body with a pencil.
- Once the student has the silhouette of their body they should write words that describe what they look like on the outside. If a child needs to look in the mirror, they can.
- On the inside of the outline they can write what makes them proud of themselves: the things that make them special. Examples can be likes and dislikes, what they want to be when they grow up, what makes them smile, etc.
- Finished silhouettes can be displayed with the title “Proud to Be Me.”

