



The Monster in the Woods

Dear Parent,

We hope you have fun talking, sharing and doing the activities with your child. The suggestions were designed for children from 3 to 10 years old. TAKE TIME TO TALK can be used across this age span, while driving, walking, bath time, bedtime chat or any time that singing a song, asking a question or sharing is appropriate. The conversation, sharing and activity when your child is 3 years old will be completely different when your child is 8-9 and 10 years old. So use this guide as a window into your child's mind and heart, and listen as your child grows up. Have fun!

Themes: **caring, courage, curiosity, flexibility, friendship, resourcefulness,**

Synopsis

The Monster in the Woods is a story that explores the concepts of: tolerance, physical differences, proper behavior, fear, respect & appreciation of nature, courage, and the power of love.

The play begins with Rip Snort, a strange looking animal-like creature, who introduces us to Namuh, a human. (The name Namuh is human spelled backwards). It's late at night, and Namuh is tired from traveling all day. He's lonely and sad and believes that he has no friends. Two lightning bugs speak to him and prove to him that he has friends that he never considered: the stars, wind & sun. When the lightning bugs fly away, Namuh sings a song celebrating nature. During his song, two unusual creatures sneak close to his campfire. Namuh holds out his hand in friendship. The creatures run away, frightened. Namuh is very sad that the creatures are frightened of him.

The two creatures, Torn Tooth and Bristle Hair, run away from Namuh as fast as they can. They pretend to each other not to be scared. They brag and sing a song of bravado. They finally admit to being afraid and feel they must warn the other creatures that they have seen a monster in the woods.

The rest of the characters in the play are: Great Snout (a rough, tough creature); Bone Joints (an older creature who is a healer); The Shadow Walker (the ominous leader); & Podsnap (a lizard-like creature who is jealous of Shadow Walker & plots to destroy him). There is a scary song by Shadow Walker explaining that even though all the creatures are afraid of him, he is really not very scary. There is also a funny song about proper "creature" behavior and a menacing song by Podsnap.

Podsnap, while trying to take over the leadership of the creatures, captures Torn Tooth, Bristle Hair, Great Snout and Rip Snort in their cave. She ties them up with a vine and reveals that she is going after Shadow Walker to freeze him with her icicle dagger. Podsnap throws swamp dust over the creatures which takes their voices away. When Bone Joints returns to the cave, the creatures try to communicate what happened to them. They mime a charade song to let Bone Joints know about Podsnap's plot.

We discover that Namuh is Shadow Walker's secret son. Namuh was sent away a long time ago because he was so different. Shadow Walker sings a song about his love for Namuh. Namuh begs to be allowed to stay and let the others get to know him. Shadow Walker refuses, saying Namuh's difference only causes problems among the creatures. As Namuh gathers his belongings, The Lightning Bugs warn him at the last moment that Shadow Walker is being attacked by Podsnap. Namuh thinks fast to protect his father and saves his father's life. He is struck by Podsnap's icicle dagger which freezes his heart. The other creatures arrive just in time to see Namuh's bravery and they beg Bone Joints to heal him. Bone Joints cannot. He says there are some hurts that even he cannot heal. The cold hate from the icicle dagger is too strong. Shadow Walker is overcome by sadness and hugs the frozen Namuh. The creatures are amazed because Shadow Walker has never outwardly shown love towards anyone. Namuh revives. Shadow Walker pledges to walk in the light and learn about his son and all that is beautiful in nature. All the creatures celebrate in song and dance. They realize that just because Namuh doesn't look like they do, he is really no different than they are.



THE MONSTER IN THE WOODS

Special Parents' Page

Your child listened to an Audio Adventure produced by Stages of Imagination, an award-winning, nonprofit, entertainment and learning organization. It is intended for three through ten year old children, and examines the topics of fear, prejudice, courage, heroism, and community support.

This guide can assist you to discuss your child's listening experience, as well as open additional paths for your child to address and cope with their feelings stemming from personal events or current events. Choose whatever questions apply to your situation or use the synopsis to talk about the plot and characters. As your child matures his or her depth of understanding will change and a return to this story and characters may be productive.

1. You listened to an audio book called THE MONSTER IN THE WOODS. Why was it called that? Were there really monsters in the play? (Namuh, a human, is considered the monster by the creatures in the woods because he is different.) Do you think there really are monsters? (Note – movies like *Shriek* and *Monsters, Inc.* are showing the flip side of scary creatures.) Were you afraid at all while you were listening?
2. There were songs as well in the play. What were some of the things that they sang about? (One of the songs is called "I'm Not Scared", sung by Torn Tooth and Bristle Hair, two child-like creatures who are frightened when they see Namuh.) Did you like the singing?
3. Was there a villain in the play? (The villain is Podsnap, a chameleon-like creature.) If so, what were she after? Did she get it? Was this character selfish? If so, why?
4. Was there any wise or older characters? (Bone Joints) What was this character's job with the other creatures? (He is a healer.) If he helped the other creatures, why did he do this? Did the other characters appreciate his help? Is it good to help others? Why? Did you ever help someone at school or while playing without being asked to? Are you aware of anyone who has helped others?
5. Did any other characters help others in the play? (Lightening bugs help Namuh, and Great Snout tries to protect the creatures from Podsnap.) What did they do?
6. Was there a hero in the play? A hero is someone who shows great courage even if s/he is afraid. Who was the hero? (Namuh) What did this character do that made her/him a hero? Is it hard to be a hero and to have courage? Have you seen or heard about anyone who is a real life hero? What that person (or group of people) do that made him/her/them heroes?
7. Do any of the characters learn anything by the end of the play? (The Shadow Walker – an initially scary creature learns to share his thoughts and feelings with others. And the other creatures learn that Namuh may look different, but he shares their same concerns and cares.) Namuh learned that you should go after what you want. (Namuh wanted his father to recognize him and to be part of his community again.) Did you learn anything by the end of the play? What was it?



An Entertainment-Learning Experience

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