Miss Nelson is Missing!

Study Guide

Written by

Cayle Townsend

This study guide is also available online at www.arvadacenter.org
Solution to Word Search with Hidden Message
The badly behaved students who were so disrespectful to their sweet teacher learned their lesson from Miss Swamp.
Miss Nelson is Missing!
Study Guide
By Cayle Townsend

I’m not concerned with your liking or disliking me... All I ask is that you respect me as a human being.”
- Jackie Robinson

Summary: Miss Nelson is Missing! takes us to Room 207 where Miss Nelson, the sweetest teacher in the school, is trying to teach the most unruly, disrespectful students ever. One day after a horrendous day in the classroom, Miss Nelson doesn’t return to school. Instead a substitute teacher, Ms. Viola Swamp, stomps in and shocks the kids with her strict discipline and unbending rules. Desperate to get rid of Miss Swamp, the kids go to great lengths to get Miss Nelson back.

Instructional Focus: The focus of this study guide is reading and writing, theatre, visual arts and music. It was written with the Colorado Model Content Standards and differentiation in mind. Specific Standards are listed below:

Colorado Model Content Standards:
For more information on these standards visit: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/olr/k12_standards.html

Reading and Writing will be symbolized by 🏉
Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.
Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.

Theatre will be symbolized by 🎭
Standard 2: Students understand and apply the creative process to fundamental skills of acting, playwriting and directing.

Visual Arts will be symbolized by 🎨
Standard 2: Students know and apply elements of art, principles of design, and sensory and expressive features of visual arts.

Geography will be symbolized by 🌍
Standard 1: Students know how to use and construct maps, globes and other geographic tools to locate and derive information about people, places and environments.
Science will be symbolized by 🌐
Standard 1: Students understand the processes of scientific investigation and design, conduct, communicate about and evaluate such investigations.
Standard 3: Students know and understand the characteristics and structure of living things, the processes of life, and how living things interact with each other and their environment.

Math will be symbolized by 🎈
Standard 2: Students use algebraic methods to explore, model and describe patterns in functions involving numbers, shapes, data and graphs in problem solving situations.

Before the Performance

Before coming to the Arvada Center to see the performance, you may want to engage your student’s interest with one of the following activities:

1. Read part or all of Miss Nelson is Missing, Miss Nelson is Back and Miss Nelson Has a Field Day by Harry Allard.

2. Find out more about Harry Allard.
   http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/chronob/ALLA1880.htm
   http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/allard.htm

3. As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Please make clear to your students that the rules of attending a live theatre performance are different than watching television at home or a movie in a theatre. As it is a live performance, it cannot be stopped and re-started. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the Arvada Center, but there are a few rules that need to be followed. Please review the following theatre etiquette rules with your students prior to your visit:
   - Food, drinks, candy and gum chewing are not permitted in the theatre.
   - Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum during the performance.
   - Keep feet on the floor, not on the seats.
   - Performers appreciate enthusiastic applause, but not whistling or shouting.
   - Please turn off all cell phones!

4. Discuss these theatre terms with your students and before the performance see if your students notice any of these items while at the Arvada Center.
   **Backstage:** All areas of the stage other than the acting area that are out of sight to the audience.
   **Downstage:** The part of the stage closest to the audience.
Upstage: The part of the stage furthest from the audience.
Doubling: An Actor that performs more than one role in a play.
Dresser: Person who helps actors with taking care of costumes and costume changes during the performance.
Freezing: Characters become motionless during a scene.
Fluff: To hesitate - to nearly forget or fumble one’s lines.
The House: The auditorium or seating of a theatre.

For more theatre terms and activities visit:
http://library.thinkquest.org/5291/terms.html
http://www.lctonstage.org/glossary.htm

**After the Performance**

1. Miss Nelson gets very creative when faced with a very big problem: a class that won’t behave. Use these ideas to explore big problems with your class:
   - Think about some big problems that you or your friends have.
     Write them on a piece of paper. Have everyone choose a problem that is not theirs. Come up with creative solutions to the problem and write a Miss Nelson Advice Column with the solutions. Discuss with your class whether the suggested solutions will work. Is it easy to solve a problem when it is not yours? Is it hard to take someone else’s advice? 1, 2, 4
   - Write an acrostic poem with suggestions for how to solve the problem (see appendix for example and web sites). 2, 4

2. Miss Nelson created a disguise for her opposite self Miss Viola Swamp.
   - Have your students create an opposite for them. To do this, they may need to think about what their appearance tells the world about who they are and decide what their opposite should wear, how it would act ... Have an opposite day where the students come dressed like their opposite. 2

   **Extension/sharing:** What do you like about your opposite self? Do you think you and your opposite would be friends? Why?

3. In this performance, we meet Miss Viola Swamp, Mr. Blansford and Detective McSmogg. How do these names describe their characters’ personalities? Create some interestingly named characters and decide what kind of personalities they might have, how they might move and talk. What things might they do for fun? How might Petunia Posey, Dr. Fishsticks, Billy O’Burger or Shoshanna Shush behave? What kinds of jobs might they have?
• **Extension:** Introduce yourself to the class as a new character and
tell five fun things about yourself. Dress, act, talk and walk like
your new character.

4. Make paper airplanes like the students in Miss Nelson’s class. Try these
websites for patterns and facts about paper airplanes:
http://www.josephpalmer.com/planes/PL1/PL1.shtml
http://paperplane.org/
http://www.10paperairplanes.com/
http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/paper.htm
http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~flight/homepage.html
Once paper airplanes are made, conduct an experiment. Have students
launch airplanes and time how long they stay in the air. Make a bar
graph of the results. Which airplanes fly the fastest or smoothest? What
makes some fly more efficiently than others? Look for the best paper
airplane design.

5. Mr. Blansford demonstrates bird calls for the students of room 207.
Research the calls of several different birds. What birds can you mimic?
Start with these websites for information:
http://www.naturesongs.com/birds.html
http://sirismm.si.edu/testperl/nasongkey.pl

6. Mr. Blansford also tells the students about his ballpoint pen collection.
As a class or in small groups decide on an item to collect. See how many
different varieties of your item your group can find. Create a museum
display of your collection.

7. Detective McSmogg sings about the exotic locations where he will search
for Miss Nelson. Divide your class into groups and have them choose one
of the following to research: Jungles of Botswana, English Channel,
Glaciers of Antarctica, The Nile, The Ruins of Peru, Steppes of Siberia,
Timbuktu, Castles in Bavaria, Sands of Arabia, Himalayas of Tibet,
Ancient Pyramids of Egypt, The Seven Seas, 7 Wonders of the World.
Map the locations on a world map.

http://ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/other.html (7 Wonders of the
World)
http://www.wonderclub.com/AllWorldWonders.html

8. Substitute teachers can be wonderful teachers … or not so wonderful.
Have your students write about a substitute they remember for good or
bad reasons or have them make up a story about a terrible experience
with a substitute teacher.
• **Extension:** Create a handbook for substitute teachers with suggestions on how to best manage your classroom.

9. The students wrote Miss Nelson a letter apologizing for their bad behavior and begging her to return. Imagine you are stuck with Ms. Viola Swamp as a substitute and write a letter to your own teacher asking her to return to your class. [2, 4]

10. Two actors in the show play multiple roles. How do they disguise themselves as new characters in a short amount of time? What do they change about their appearance (hair, makeup, costume)? What do they change physically (voice, movement, posture)?

11. Try it yourself! How much can you change your appearance by changing your body movements, facial expression and voice?

• **Extension:** Conduct a quick change costume race in your classroom. Collect several different costumes - be sure to include extras like hats, shoes, glasses - and see who is the quickest to change costumes. Have your students briefly speak or act like the different characters during the race. [2]

12. The play takes place in several different locations: the school, Miss Nelson’s house and the Police Station. How does the set designer of the play change the scenery to show the audience that we have moved to a new location? How would you do it differently? Draw pictures of your own set for *Miss Nelson is Missing!* or another story. [2]

13. Put on your own musical! In small groups, choose a song to learn. Make up your own choreography (movement or dance) to go with your song and perform it for your class. [2]

14. Have your students write a review of the performance and send it to the Arvada Center. Ask them to include what their favorite character, their impression of the set and costumes and their favorite part of the performance. You could also have them write the letters to the actors! [1]

Send these to:

The *Miss Nelson is Missing!* Cast  
c/o Kathleen Murphy  
Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities  
6901 Wadsworth Blvd  
Arvada, CO 80003
Appendix

Acrostic Poem

http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/acrostic
a fantastic on line way to write acrostic poems
http://www.gigglepoetry.com/poetryclass/acrostic.html
Bruce Lansky site with lots of good ideas

Does any one realize all the
Ridiculous things
Actors and actresses
Must endure before hearing the
Applause?
- - - - - Allison C.

About the Study Guide Author:

Cayle Townsend is a retired teacher with 20 years experience teaching gifted students who currently consults with and coaches teachers of gifted students. She also spends lots of time with her 2 teenaged daughters and husband.

Special thanks to: Beyond the Blackboard

Hidden Message in Word search on the following page

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
Miss Nelson is Missing Word Search with Hidden Message

The letters in the message are hidden between the words in the word search. When all the words are found, the hidden message will be revealed.

B T L H E B B A D L Y B E H A V E D S S T C S E S
A U E A D E I R O T I N A J N T S W D H O H W T I
L E T R P E R N O I T C E L L O C S I O E E E E U B
L D T I S I D R E S P T S W A M P E M N G R C T E
P Y E C T F C U L T O E T H E I R S A A E Y N I R
O W R E E T A N T E A A G C H E R N R C O L E T I
I L H O E A L O I T H C C O N I P I R Y I G N I S A
N E D I G T L H E R I H S R I G L N P T R E C B A
T S S S S E S S S O N P E F T A D O R O C A M S U P
M E A E M T R I S S R W N U S A A A M R P C P S O
Z I Y M A E D R O F S D N A L B E Z R T Y M I G O
B N A Y S L N O Y H D S H V A U L N U N D O N E G
H E E B K W R M E S W V D R O I E O O S H G N L Z
N O S I L L A A I A A Z Z I T L D E T E C T I V E
A T D P Z N V O T H S N U A S K A K Z Q H U N H A
Y H P O S O L I H P E L N M A A I R P L A N E S R
R E L U R P X P H P M M C C N R C W H L W S I A E
A Q J S R J K H V G B X E J A T F R O H P F R Q T
T I M B U K T U I P L V I L N O R O X E D A O C S
M C H Y R O T S Z V Y G K K E N H R C L B Y Z N O
W V Y X P I K Q X W R M Y M Z C P T O I V K E S P

ADAM  COLLECTION  MILKCARTON  SCHOOL
AIRPLANES  DETECTIVE  NELSON  SCIENCE
ALLISON  ELEMENTARY  NILE  SEVENSEAS
ANTARCTICA  GEOGRAPHY  PENS  SHENANIGANS
APOLOGIZE  GOLDFISH  PERU  SIBERIA
ARABIA  GREGORY  PHILOSOPHY  STORY
ASSEMBLY  HANSON  PINOCCHIO  STUDENTS
BALLPOINT  HIMALAYAS  POSTER  SUBSTITUTE
BAVARIA  HISTORY  PRINCIPAL  SWAMP
BIRDCALLS  JANITOR  PYRAMIDS  TEACHER
BLANDSFORD  LETTER  READING  TIMBUKTU
BOTSWANA  MATH  RESPECT  TINO
CHERYL  MCSMOGG  RULER  ZACK
MISS NELSON IS MISSING!
PARENT/TEACHER EVALUATION

We value your input!

Please take a moment to fill out this evaluation and return to:
Kathleen Murphy, Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities
6901 Wadsworth Blvd, Arvada, CO, 80003
or
hand it in at the Arvada Center Box Office.

Date of performance: ______________________________________________________

Name of School Group or Family: __________________________________________

PLAY
I. Youth Response
   Enthusiasm __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
   Understanding of the content __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

II. Content
   Appropriate length __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
   Appropriate for group __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
   Ability to integrate into curriculum __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

III. Study Guide
   Usefulness in preparing students for the production __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
   Usefulness in conducting post viewing activities __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
   Clarity and completeness of activity instructions __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
   Age appropriateness of content __________________________ Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

Comments: ______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________