

## **Why Epossumondas Has No Hair on His Tail**

Written by Coleen Salley and Illustrated by Janet Stevens

(Suggested lesson submitted by Criss Smith, LMS @ Lee Elementary)

This lesson can be adapted for other grades.

**Second Grade OK PASS: Reading/Literature** standards 3, 5, 6, and 7; **Writing/Grammar/Usage** standards 2.1; **Oral Language/Listening and Speaking** standards 1.1 & 2; **Visual/Literary** standards 1

1. If persimmons are in season, the teacher passes around 2 or 3 persimmons and asks if anyone knows what they are. Let them hold and smell the fruit. Cut one open so they can see what they are like on the inside.
2. Begin the lesson by telling the students you are going to read them a story that explains why opossums have long skinny pink tails, and that the problem all started with an appetite for persimmons. According to the story, opossums used to have a white powder-puff of a tail. Invite them to share their prediction for opossum's drastic change in appearance. Tell the children they should listen for a refrain in the story and invite them to say it with you. Begin reading the story.
3. Ask a few questions to check for general comprehension. This story can be turned into a **Readers Theater script**. If your class has not done this, explain the process. You will need a reader for narrator, Papapossum, Hare, and Bear. As a class you will write a script. The dialogue in the story is the script for the 3 characters, and the narrator tells what happens in between the conversations. The script is taken directly from the text of the story. The readers sit on chairs or stools facing the class. They can have some props that distinguish them from one another. The characters don't move around much, but they can be very expressive. They stay within the area of their stool or chair. If the class has not participated in an activity like this before, the teacher can have a script ready so the students have a model to follow for future scripting of stories. Your school's LMS can help with this activity.
4. If your class has read other books illustrated by Janet Stevens, ask them if you covered up the name of the illustrator on *Why Epossumondas Has No*

*Hair on His Tail*, how could they tell it was illustrated by her? What clues do they recognize in her artwork?

**Suggestion for follow-up activity:** If your students liked this story, introduce them to **pourquoi** [por-kwa] **stories** which are stories that explain why some things happen in nature. Kipling's "Just So" stories fall into this category. For lesson ideas using pourquoi stories, go to <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/pourquoitales.htm>

**Readers Theater resource :** If you are unfamiliar with readers theater read *Tell it Together: Foolproof Scripts for Story Theatre* by Barbara McBride-Smith. Barbara's book is in all elementary TPS libraries.