Some Things Are Scary:  
(No Matter How Old You Are)

Written by Florence Perry Heide  
Illustrated by Jules Feiffer


Genre: Narrative, Memoir  
Subjects: Reading, Writing  
Educational Themes: Perspective, Repetitive Pattern

SUMMARY

When you were just a child, did you ever grab the hand of someone you thought was your mother, then realized it was a total stranger? Have you ever been lost in a department store, imagining that you’ll never see your parents again? Well in Some Things are Scary, a young boy describes several scary experiences (that most children and even adults can relate to) from the perspective of a small child. Skating downhill and not knowing how to stop, stepping on something squishy in bare feet, and finding out your best friend has a best friend that isn’t you are some of the scary things that frighten children (and adults) everywhere. Perry Heide’s poignant book has a repetitive, suspenseful structure with humorous illustrations that remind us all that for children, not only monsters are scary.

WHAT'S INSIDE

6-Trait  | Writer's Craft  | Habits of Mind  | Hawaiian Value  | General Learner Outcomes

6-TRAIT

IDEA: Scary things don’t have to come from horror movies. Fear is something children experience when they are removed from their sense of security. Children can write or discuss what situations make them feel scared.  
ORGANIZATION: Each page introduces a new scary thing, simply stating that it is “scary” in a repeating pattern. This can provide a model to follow in creating class or individual books.

WRITER'S CRAFT

WRITING FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES: The author is writing this book from the perspective of a child about what a child finds to be scary. Children can practice this craft by thinking of the story from other perspectives: their pet’s, their parent’s, or even inanimate objects experiences of what is “scary.”
**HABITS OF MIND**

**MANAGING IMPULSIVITY:** Often children jump the gun and run when confronted with a situation that is frightening or anticipated to be frightening, like the first day of school. Following the reading of this book, a student discourse can help students to not only share frightening experiences, but also to also think about how to better manage the impulse to be frightened.

**THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING:** Student predictions about what the story is about will be very telling. A discussion following the reading to compare and contrast predictions, to the author’s interpretation of scary things, is a smooth segue into metacognition.

**HAWAIIAN VALUE**

**HA‘AHA‘A (Humility):** We are all humbled by fear of the unknown. Being lost, being embarrassed and being young are all humbling experiences that remind our students that they need the support of parents and community to feel safe and comfortable.

**GENERAL LEARNER OUTCOMES**

**COMPLEX THINKER:** Our students will delve into their memory bank of scary situations after studying this book. They will think about frightening situations they have been in, connect to the situations the author introduces, as well as be introduced to other situations through discussions as a class or with small groups. Finding ways to deal with their fears or to classify them in discussion also adds complexity to the thinking process.

**THINGS TO TALK ABOUT AND NOTICE...**

- In this story, things are scary from a child’s perspective; students can relate their own experiences to that of the narrator.
- Fears are often overcome with maturity and flexible thinking. A discussion can follow about how students cope with their fears.
- The author’s intent is to provide suspense. The reader is almost relieved that there are no monsters in the book.
- The word “scary” has a myriad of interpretations, as beautifully illustrated in this book. Feelings of abandonment, rejection, and uncertainty are all described as “scary.” Students can discuss the various types and degrees of scary things.

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

- Pre reading: Think about the title *Some Things are Scary* and predict what you might find inside this book.
- Connect: What are some similar or different scary experiences you have had? Did you agree or disagree with the author’s opinion of what is scary?
- Can you infer how the character will deal with his fear? Would an adult have the same reaction?
- What are some of the ways this author creates suspense? How did you feel at the beginning of the book? At the end?
- How does the author use humor to engage the reader?
### OTHER RELATED BOOKS

- *There is a Monster Under My Bed* written by Mercer Mayer
- *Courage* written by Bernard Waber
- *The Important Book* written by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Fortunately* written by Remy Charlip

### Possible Connection Activities

- **Narrative Writing:** Students can write their own “scary stories” in the writer’s workshop.
- **Small Moments:** Students can write a small moment story focusing on dialogue and character action to depict a scary moment.
- **Double Bubble Map:** Students can compare and contrast their scary experiences with that of the author, noting those they have in common.