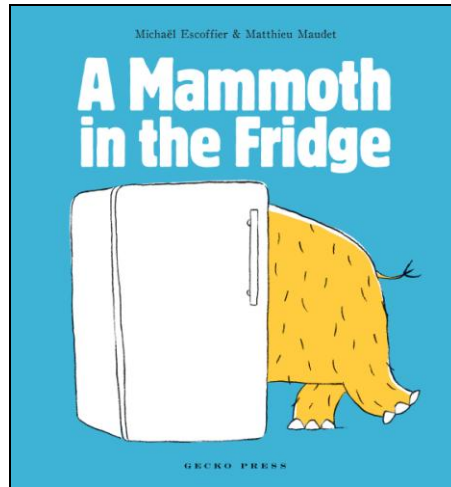


Teaching Notes

A Mammoth in the Fridge by Michaël Escoffier and Matthieu Maudet



Synopsis

A boy called Noah discovers a mammoth in the fridge. At first, his father doesn't believe him – but the evidence is too strong. It's sitting in the fridge! Unsure of how to get it out Noah's parents call the fire brigade. However, the mammoth slips past their net and ends up perched high in a tree where they all simply leave it. Only Noah's little sister knows where the mammoth came from and it isn't until the evening thanks to a combination of carrots and quiet cunning that we find out too.

The Author

Michaël Escoffier was born in 1970. He lives in Lyon, France with his wife and two children.

The Illustrator

Matthieu Maudet lives in Rennes, France, where he devotes himself entirely to comics and illustrating children's book.

Themes

This lively and extremely funny picture book explores several themes.

One of these themes is how people react when faced with an extremely unusual situation. On hearing Noah's news his parents don't believe there could be a mammoth in their fridge, but faced with the reality they panic and then quickly call the fire brigade for help.

The firemen appear undaunted by the situation. However, after a failed attempt to trap it and a mad chase, they give up and simply leave the mammoth where it escaped to, stuck up a tree. Noah's parents follow their example, deciding as the mammoth is no longer in their house it is no longer their problem, and also leave. All these characters appear to give up in the face of adversity and choose to desert the mammoth.

The theme of loyalty is then explored as Elsa refuses to abandon the mammoth despite the potential problems that could result for her.

The book also deals with the themes of privacy, secrecy, and the power of the imagination. All of these are illustrated when we discover what Elsa has managed to keep secret from her family in the privacy of her bedroom.

Activities

1. Look at the cover image and title. What do you think this story might be about?
2. Investigate mammoths. For example, when did mammoths live, what made them extinct, what was a mammoth's natural habitat, call, food, etc. Present your findings to your class.
3. If you find a mammoth in the fridge, there are two questions you should ask: How did it get there and how do you get it out? Answer these two questions.
4. Read the author's and illustrator's dedications. If you wrote a book to whom would you dedicate it and what would your dedication say?
5. The author uses the word 'Wheee-ooo!' for the fire engine's siren. This is onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia is a word which imitates a noise or action. What other example of onomatopoeia can you find in the book? Think of some more examples.
6. Find out what a fireman's job entails. Write your findings up in pamphlet or poster format.
7. The fire brigade's trap to catch the mammoth fails. Design, then draw a labelled diagram of your own mammoth trap.
8. The author uses a lot of exclamation marks in the book. Why do you think he does this? Find other examples of punctuation that have been used in the book.
9. Look at the sign on Elsa's bedroom door. Design a similar sign for your own bedroom door.

10. What other creatures does Elsa have in her room? Choose one of these creatures or create your own. Write and illustrate your own picture book about it. Or: find out about an unusual animal rescue story from animal control, an animal shelter or the internet. Write and illustrate your own picture book about it.
11. The book has a surprise ending. In pairs, go back and read the story again to find the clues in the illustrations. List any that you find.
12. Examine the illustrations in the book. What attracts your attention to a particular picture? What colours are used? What kind of lines and textures are used? Do you like the cartoon-style? Do the pictures mirror the text or go beyond what the story tells you? Which is your favourite picture and why?
13. Write a plot summary of the story.
14. In groups, choose one of the scenes from the book. Devise a script and act it out for your class. If you have access to a video camera, tape it.
15. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. Give it a rating. For example, using stars or a number out of ten.