

Simple Literature No. 80: Curriculum for
The Fly on the Ceiling: A Math Myth

by S. Seifert

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How to Use This Curriculum

- 1.** Have students read this book for 20 to 30 minutes each day.
- 2.** When students have finished the book, ask the **Comprehension Questions**. A study guide worksheet is available for practice, but an oral discussion is appropriate for this age group.
- 3.** When you have finished discussing the comprehension questions, have students **Write a Paragraph**. Students should write in complete sentences, spell words correctly, capitalize the first letter of every sentence, and place a period at the end of each sentence.
- 4.** Although these guidelines work for this age group, remember that your students are individuals. Therefore, adjust the curriculum to your students' abilities and personalities.

Did you find something confusing, or are you excited about the curricula? You can contact us through <http://home.rmi.net/~seifert/id51.html>.

Although the number of e-mails received does not allow me to respond personally, every e-mail is read and appreciated.

If you want to view an alphabetical list of titles that have free comprehension questions, go to <http://home.rmi.net/~seifert/id50.html>.

S. Seifert

Curriculum for *The Fly on the Ceiling: A Math Myth* by Dr. Julie Glass

OVERVIEW

1. Have students read for 20 to 30 minutes.
Reading for half an hour, and not a completed book, is the daily goal. A study guide for this book is available. If you assign it, let students complete the study guide while they are reading the book.
2. When students have finished reading the book, ask the comprehension questions (study guide questions). If you assigned the written study guide, let students read their answers from it.
3. Prompt students to write a paragraph.

SUMMARY

Rene Descartes was a thinker who lived in France. Rene was smart, but he made messes and lost things. He knew he had to do something about his problem. He bought a loaf of bread and ate it by the river Seine. Day turned to night. Rene forgot to pay attention where he was going, and he fell into the river. By the time he went home, he had a cold. The next morning, he was sick, so he stayed in bed and stared at the ceiling. A fly was on the ceiling. It would fly to one area and then another. Rene wondered if the fly always landed at new locations. He wanted to record each place the fly landed. To do this, he drew horizontal and vertical lines on the ceiling. Then he numbered each line. Rene watched the fly and wrote down where it landed in relation to the lines, such as line two (vertically) and line five (horizontally). After following the fly's movements all morning, Rene thought he might be able to keep track of his things. He painted lines on his floor and put each item in its place on the grid. Then Rene made a chart that told him where everything was. With his new system, Rene was able to keep track of his things. This graph system is called the Cartesian Coordinate System today, and we use it for maps, math and many other things. Rene was probably not messy nor did he fall into the river—but he did create the Cartesian Coordinate System.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Rene see when he was sick in bed?
Rene saw a fly on his ceiling.
2. What did Rene wonder when he was sick in bed? Rene wondered whether the fly on his ceiling ever landed in the same place twice.
3. What did Rene make when he saw a fly on his ceiling? Rene used horizontal and vertical lines to create a graph that we know today as the Cartesian Coordinate System. With it, he could plot numbers (coordinates). We still use this system today.

WRITE A PARAGRAPH

Have students relate one aspect of *The Fly on the Ceiling* to their own lives by writing a paragraph: Rene Descartes was a real man who watched a fly on his ceiling. From watching it, he came up with the Cartesian Coordinate System. The rest of this story about him—his making messes and falling in the river—was pretend. Now it's time for you to use your imagination. Write a story about something else that could have happened to Rene so that he caught a cold and had to stay in bed and watch a fly on his ceiling.

Name _____ Date _____

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Instructions: Write your answers in the spaces below.

1. What did Rene see when he was sick in bed?

2. What did Rene wonder when he was sick in bed?

3. What did Rene make when he saw a fly on his ceiling?