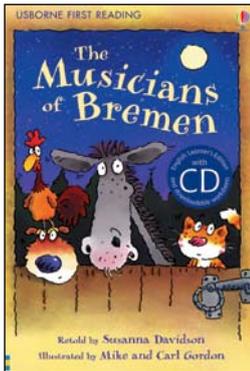


The Musicians of Bremen • Teacher's notes



Author: The Brothers Grimm, retold by Susanna Davidson

Reader level: Lower Intermediate

Word count: 507

Lexile level: 200L

Text type: Folk tale from Europe

About the story

A mean farmer is mistreating his donkey, dog, cat and rooster. When he threatens to cook the rooster, the animals decide it's time to run away to Bremen (a market town in north Germany), and join the town band. On the way they find a cottage in a spooky forest. They're tempted by the food, drink and warmth inside, but first they have to contend with a band of robbers. The donkey comes up with a brilliant plan, and the dog, the cat and the rooster all climb onto his back and bray, bark, miaow and crow in chorus, successfully scaring the robbers off so that they can enjoy the feast.

As they fall asleep, the littlest robber creeps back. It's very dark and he can't see the cat that scratches him, the dog that bites him, the donkey that kicks him and the rooster that crows. Instead, he thinks he's been attacked by a witch, a man with a knife, and a big, black monster. He runs to tell the other robbers, and this time they're scared off for good. As for the animals, they never make it to Bremen. They're much too happy in their cottage in the woods.

About the authors

Many of our best-known fairy tales were collected and retold by the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785-1863 and 1786-1859), from Hanau in north-west Germany. They began collecting folk tales originally as part of their study of the German language. The stories were published as "Children's and Household Tales", between 1812-1814, but the brothers continued to add stories and adapt existing ones until 1857. Today they are retold around the world in over 160 languages, as well as being the inspiration for countless movies, musicals, opera, ballet and other artworks.

Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

p2	mean [meaning "unkind"]	p32	chief
	musicians	p34	shining
p6	rooster	p36	leaped
p8	crowed	p35	coals
p10	stew	p38	yard
p11	master	p40	screached
p12	didgeridoo	p42	panted
p16	cottage	p43	spat
	crept		scratched
p18	gang	p44	stabbed
	robbers	p45	beat
p24	burst		club

Key phrases

p2	to be mean to [someone]
p7	I'll get him [meaning "I'll catch/kill him"]
p8	as hard as he could
p11	Oh no he's not
	He must be stopped
p12	to run away
p14	to set off
	at once
p19	If only...
p25	Run for your lives!
p32	to go out [lights]
p41	as fast as he could
p47	they never did

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Before reading

You might like to collect pictures of farm animals and musical instruments, either as prompts or to illustrate the activity below.

Draw three columns on the board, and write the heading "Animal noises" above the middle column. Write out some animal noises, including the ones from the story, in the column below (students may not be familiar with the English spellings). Write the heading "Farm animals" above the first column, ask students to name the farm animals they know in English, and write them at random in the first column. (Try to include the four animals in the story.) For the third column, write the heading "Instruments", ask students to name instruments in English and again write them at random.

When you have made your three lists, ask students to match the animals to their noises. Then ask if they think any of the noises match particular instruments (there are no right or wrong answers).

Now look at the book's cover with your students. Ask if the animals look like musicians. Ask what noises they make, and what instruments students think they might play.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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|-------|---|-----|---|
| pp2-3 | What do you think is mean in this picture? | | when they say "Oh!" |
| pp4-5 | How is the man mean to the dog and cat? | p23 | What do you think the animals sound like all together? |
| p8 | Do roosters normally crow at night? When do they crow? [Typically early in the morning, although they can crow during the day too.] | p22 | How can you tell these men are robbers? |
| | | p27 | What are the posters on the wall? Why are they "wanted"? Who wants them? [The police] |
| p12 | Why do you think the cat chooses the violin? Do you know what noise does a didgerigoo makes? [If you can, you might like to search for a sound clip to play.] | p32 | Why doesn't the robber chief go himself? |
| | | p41 | How do you think the robber is feeling? |
| p18 | Look at the two speech bubbles. How are they different? How do you think the animals feel when they say "Oooh!" and | p47 | In the end, the animals don't become musicians. Do you think the story's title is a good one, or would you change it? [You could say it is meant to be funny/ironic.] |

After reading

Ask the class why they think the animals were happy to stay at the house rather than go and be musicians. How did life in the house compare to life on the farm? Do you think they would have made good musicians? What do you think the robbers did next?

Look at pages 36 to 45 again. In the dark, the little robber thought the cat was a spitting, scratching witch. It's easy to make mistakes when you can't see! Ask students if they have ever had a similar experience. Can you think of anything else which might look different in the dark? For example, a car's headlamps might look like dragon's eyes, and so on.

