



The Worst Witch

by Jill Murphy

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NOVEL STUDY

The Worst Witch, by Jill Murphy

SUMMARY

This novel follows Mildred Hubble as she struggles through life at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches. This story explores the many problems Mildred faces, the consequences of acting without thinking, and the rewards of loyalty. The experiences of Mildred are still relevant for today's young people, and will offer an opportunity for discussion on topics such as feelings, friendships, bullying, decision-making and the value of goal setting.

The book has 10 chapters, each between 6-10 pages long.

CHARACTER REVIEW

Mildred Hubble
Maud
Miss Cackle
Miss Hardbroom
Ethel Hallow

SEL THEMES IN THE BOOK

- Friendship
- Goal setting and Problem Solving
- Feelings review: excited, worried, scared/afraid, proud, smug, sorry, anger, misery, embarrassment, horror, sad, happy, nervous



STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

- **Why do you think there were so many rules in the Academy?** Refer back to lesson on rules – following the rules keeps us safe, keeps us out of trouble, and helps us learn. Explore the concept that rules are a very important part of everyone's life. Discuss the problems that could be faced in a school with no rules – and from this discussion ask about the added problems that could be faced in a witches school if there were no rules.
- **In what ways did Mildred break the rules?** Annoyed the teachers, hat on back to front, bootlaces trailing, crashed her broom stick etc. **Why do you think she was always getting into trouble? How do you think she felt? Do you think the Control Signals could help her?**
- **Mildred was feeling worried (uncomfortable) and Maud was feeling excited (comfortable) about the same event (Presentation of the kittens). Could anyone name a time when you felt one feeling, but someone else was feeling very a different way about the same event?** (You might like to give an example of your own, e.g. you were with a group of friends who were really excited to be going on the rollercoaster, but you felt worried/anxious/sick about having to go on it!) Reinforce the fact that different people can feel differently about the same thing – and that all feelings are OK.
- **How do you feel about the way Miss Hardbroom spoke to the girls? Do you think she intended to be mean?**

Activity

- **Hot Seat Activity** – As Mildred, explore what you could do to change your feeling. As Maud, what could you do to help your friend when they're feeling worried and uncomfortable? Discuss the different things you can do to change your feelings – 3 steps for calming down, CSP, Go for walk, Music, Do something you enjoy etc....
- **Literacy Activity** – Write about a time when you were worried something was going to go wrong, or that something bad was going to happen. How did you feel? Did you overcome your problem? How?

Chapter 2

- **How do you think Mildred felt when she saw her kitten coming out of the basket?**
- **Mildred tried to get her kitten to hold on to the broomstick, but after many failed attempts she lost her temper and gave the kitten a shake. Was this an OK or a NOT OK behaviour? What should she have done instead?** CSP – Stopped, Took a long deep breath, said the problem and how she felt, thought of a plan, and tried her plan. **After she had done this, she did calm down and tried again, still with no luck. Finally, she thought of an idea to solve her problem. What was her plan?** Put the kitten into her school satchel and hooked the satchel over the end of the broom.
- **How had Mildred felt before she thought of her plan?** Frustrated, cross, upset...**How did she feel after she tried her plan?** Delighted, happy...
- **Was Mildred's plan a good one? What would you have done?**

Chapter 3



- **Who were the main characters involved in chapter 3?** *Ethel, Mildred, Miss Hardbroom*
- **How do you think Mildred felt when Ethel was nasty to her?**
- **What should Mildred do when Ethel keeps teasing her?** *CSP, Make a plan – ignore her, walk away, make a joke of it, ask her calmly why she keeps teasing her, agree with her etc.*
- **Mildred realized she had made a mistake as soon as she turned Ethel into a pig, and apologised straight away. Why did she do the spell in the first place?** *Ethel kept teasing her, Ethel told her to do it, Mildred wanted to prove that she could do it, peer pressure, anger etc.... Reinforce the fact that she had not stopped to calm down, and did not think of the consequences of her actions*
- **What were the consequences of her actions?** *In trouble with Miss Hardbroom, made a bigger enemy of Ethel, broke the school rules, embarrassed in library, wasting time in library that could have been spent studying*

Activity

- **Feelings Activity** – Make a list of all the feelings mentioned in chapter 3. Divide these feelings according to the person who felt them – Mildred, Ethel and Miss Hardbroom
- **Role-play** – In groups of 2, take turns to role-play the scene between Ethel and Mildred, having Mildred use the CSP to think of a plan. Try out the plan and see if it works!

Chapter 4

- **How do you think the pupils were feeling on the morning of the test?** *Nervous, worried, scared*
- **What would you do if you turned up for a test and hadn't learnt the correct work?**
- **What can we learn from chapter 4 about the relationship between Maud and Mildred?**
- **Mildred is faced with a big problem in this chapter when she is sent to Miss Cackle. What is the problem she is facing?** *Miss Cackle has told Mildred that she does not want to hear any more bad reports about her. Discuss what you know about Mildred's character from reading the first four chapters. Do you think this is possible for Mildred? Find evidence from the text to support this – p8-9, p14, p26, p31, p39, p42-3 provides good examples of Mildred in trouble*

Activity

- **Make a Plan** – in your cooperative learning groups, make a plan for Mildred to stay out of trouble.

Chapter 5

- **When Miss Hardbroom was telling the class about their Halloween celebrations, she described how she was having 2 feelings at one time. Can anyone remember what they were?** *Pleasure and Worry – discuss how we can feel two things at one time – [Refer back to Lesson 6 of the P5 Manual which introduces pupils to the concept that we can have more than one feeling at a time]*
- **Miss Hardbroom's class was not confident enough to make a decision about the Halloween celebrations, and so the class went with Miss Hardbroom's idea. Why did they not give her other suggestions? Can you think of a time your**



class made a decision that was not led by the teacher? How did that make you feel?

- **Miss Hardbroom's class had an important Goal they wanted to achieve. What was it?** *To perform successfully at the Halloween celebrations. What did they do in order to achieve this goal* *They worked very hard, persevered, every spare minute was spent practicing [Refer to Lesson 33-36 of the Manual on Goals, in particular on Benjamin Carson L35 which deals with persistence and trying hard to reach our goals.]*
- **What do you think Ethel said to the broom? What do you think is going to happen?**

Activity

- **Writing Prompt** - Try to predict what you think is going to happen in the rest of this story based on the information you have so far.

Chapter 6

- **The author compliments Miss Hardbroom quite a lot at the beginning of chapter 6. What do we learn about Miss Hardbroom from these?** *Review the 4 types of compliments, something you have, something you do, the way you look, the type of person you are. Which type of compliment is given about Miss Hardbroom? The way she looks – splendid in full witch's robes and hat, looked particularly impressive...long black hair streaming behind her, looks quite nice like that etc.....*
- **How would the class have felt as they were flying out to do the presentation?** *Nervous, excited, worried, calm, happy, confident, shy, scared etc..... Discuss a wide range of emotions, discuss several of the children, teachers, Miss Cackle – discuss how all people have different feelings, reinforce the fact that different people feel different ways about the same time – and also reinforce the fact that some people can feel more than one feeling at a time. Emphasise that all feelings are OK.*
- **Has your class ever had to perform in front of lots of people?** *Communion last year, assembly, school show etc.... How did you feel?*

Activity

- **Problem-Solving Activity** – At the end of this chapter, Mildred is faced with a huge problem. In co-operative learning groups, identify Mildred's problem, how she/and others would be feeling, decide on a goal for Mildred, think of 3 possible solutions, think about the consequences of each one, choose the best solution and make a plan that you think Mildred should try out. Role-play this in your group.
- **Letter Writing Activity** – Pretend you are Mildred. Write a letter home to your parents explaining what happened at the Halloween Celebrations. Describe how Mildred felt and how much trouble she is in.

Chapter 7

- Explore the feelings involved by everyone at the beginning of this chapter

Mildred	Maud	Ethel	Classmates	Miss Hardbroom	Miss Cackle
Upset	Disappointed	Malicious	Hurt	Furious	Furious
Worried	Let down	Proud	Upset	Annoyed	Disappointed
Afraid	Sad	Happy	Angry	Disappointed	Annoyed



Surprised Cross Smug
(U)
Guilty Surprised
Lonely
Humiliated

- When Mildred finds out what Ethel has done, what should she do?
- What does she do?

Chapter 8

- Mildred is faced with another more difficult problem in chapter 8. What is it? What do you think she should do?
- Mildred had to make a plan. What was her goal? “We can’t let them take over the school.” What was her solution to the problem? “Dare I turn the whole lot of them into snails?” Did she think about the consequences? Yes and No – she realized it was against the Witches’ Code, but she felt it was self-defence, however, there may have been other consequences – discuss what else might have happened, such as witches finding her before she got a chance to do the spell etc..... Do you think this was the best solution she could have tried?
- What would you have done in her position?

Chapter 9

- Chapter 9 talks about the Witches’ Code in more detail. Do you have anything similar to that in school? *Class Rules*. Why is it important to have a Witches’ Code? Refer back to the

School rules – Rules give us order and help us feel safe, Rules make it easier to learn, and Rules keep us out of trouble. Refer to Mildred and how, if she kept the rules, she might have stayed out of trouble! Discuss also the various spells and activities witches have to be involved in – talk about how this increases the importance of rules.

Chapter 10

- At the beginning of the novel, Ethel was the “good girl” and Mildred was the “trouble-maker.” Discuss how these roles have changed as the novel progressed, ending with Mildred as the ultimate “heroine” of the book, and Ethel as the “villain” with no-one talking to her.

Activity

- **Writing Prompt** - Imagine that you are a reporter who was inside the school to cover the story of Mildred’s heroism. Write a newspaper article to describe the events you have witnessed in the school.

Additional Study Questions

Review the characters in the story.
What are the main characteristics

