

Activities for  
*I Don't Have an Uncle Phil Anymore*  
By  
Marge Pellegrino

### Wisdom Book

Before reading "Uncle Phil," encourage students to listen for ways the child comes to an understanding of the new situation he confronts in the story.

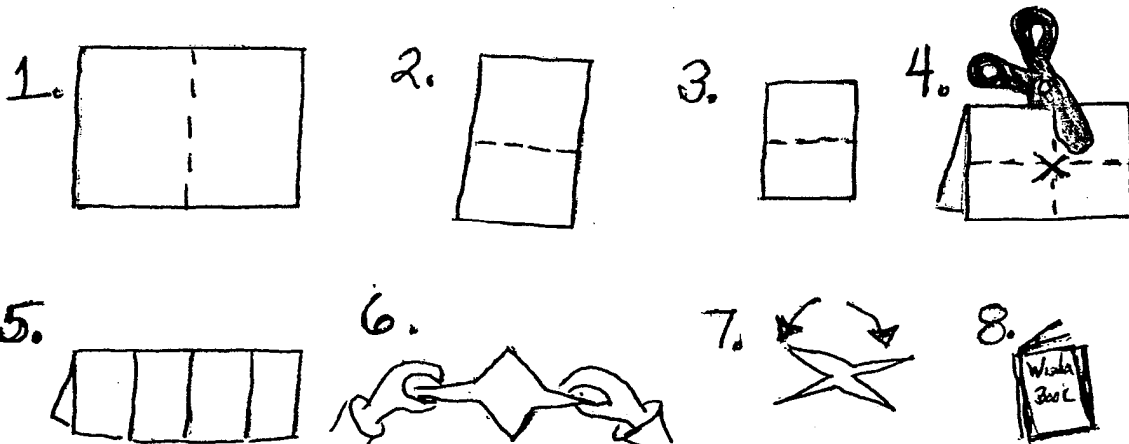
After reading, brainstorm. Students may notice that the protagonist listens, asks questions and observes. Ultimately the child looks inward and finds peace in his heart. We all encounter new situations in our lives. The more wisdom we acquire, the richer our lives become. Ask what other ways we can gain wisdom. Be sure to notice when students talk about learning facts as opposed to gaining wisdom.

Discuss the difference between facts and wisdom if the distinction isn't clear. After the discussion, students create a Wisdom Book. Inside they record and illustrate strategies that they use to become wiser or strategies they feel would be helpful to them in the future. Invite students to share their books and borrow ideas.

Follow-up by writing about a specific situation where each student gained wisdom and share those stories.

The directions that follow will produce a book that can be reversible. One side could contain the "Wisdom Book" and turned inside out, it could hold the story of the student's experience.

1. Fold a piece of paper (letter, legal or ledger size) in half using the "hamburger" fold rather than "hotdog" fold. Open and fold it in the other direction, so the crease is clear.
2. Fold it again, and re-fold in the opposite direction.
3. Fold again and refold.
4. Open to the first original hamburger fold and cut from the folded edge along the crease line to the middle where the folds meet from both directions.
5. Open and refold in a hotdog fold.
6. Holding the ends, move your hands together a few inches and look for the diamond that will form in the middle where the paper has been cut.
7. Push the ends together so that the pages are formed.
8. Fold it in half and the book is ready to go!



## Point of View

The point of view of a story is the foundation of the voice. After reading *Uncle Phil* ask the students whose point of view the story represents.

Invite students to write a paragraph about an important scene they shared with someone in their family. Ask for ideas about a scene or prime the pump with examples like a birthday party, the first day of school or when they got stitches.

After sharing a few of those with the group, reread the first page of *Uncle Phil* to put them back in the scene. Ask students how that might have sounded if it was written from the mother's point of view. You'll get something like:

*I drive with my son to a birthday party where I'll be painting faces. "I guess I'll paint more hearts than anything else. What do you guess?" "Dragons!" my son says. He's so darn cute I can't STAND it. As we stop in front of the party house, I think painting hearts will make me feel better about my brother Phil who is sick.*

Ask the students to rewrite their paragraph from the point of view of someone else present. Ask them to share.

## Journal Springboards

\*Degrees of grief can be experienced around other kinds of losses like a friend moving away, a lost pet, or even the closing of a school year. Ask the students to brainstorm other situations when they had had similar feelings. Ask them to write what they remember and what made them feel better.

\*If students experienced death, ask them to write about how the story was like what happened in their family and ways it was different.

## Rituals

\**Uncle Phil* portrays rituals that a segment of the American population follows around the death of someone they love.

\*What rituals do other cultures and other parts of our culture observe around death?

\*What other life events include rituals?

Have the students research or work from materials you've already pulled about the rituals that you've chosen to explore.

Create a ritual book about a culture's ritual, or about how different cultures observe different rituals around the same life event.

Marge Pellegrino teaches writing for schools, libraries and community settings including ArtsReach, the Tucson Writers' Project, KARE, and the Hopi Foundation's Owl and Panther: Writing from the Darkness program. On the Artist Roster of the Arizona Commission of the Arts, Marge is also the author of [Too Nice](#) and [My Grandma's the Mayor](#) published by Magination Press, an imprint of the American Psychological Association, [www.maginationpress.com](http://www.maginationpress.com). The teacher resource book she co-wrote with Joan Daniels, *The Folded Spiral in the Classroom* is available at [www.exceptionalstudentstore.com/](http://www.exceptionalstudentstore.com/) Marge can be reached at [margepell@comcast.net](mailto:margepell@comcast.net).