

THAT INTIMIDATING FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The Teacher From the Black Lagoon
By Mike Thaler

Learning Objectives: Students will:

1. empathize with the student's fears about the first day of school
2. compare and contrast characters in a story
3. create a new idea for a book about other school personnel who seem intimidating
4. compose a letter of appreciation

TEKS: LA 3rd grade – Figure 19 F;
4th grade – Figure 19F, 5.11E, Figure 19F

Materials Needed: *The Teacher From the Black Lagoon* by Mike Thaler
(Scholastic, 1989, ISBN 0590419625)

Vocabulary: nightmare, utopia, characteristics, expectations

Teaching Strategy:

1. Introduce the book by guiding a classroom discussion about the expectations and nervousness regarding the first day of school. Ask children to tell about their concerns and expectations of the teacher, the classroom, the school year.
2. Tell students that the main character in the book, *The Teacher From the Black Lagoon*, had similar anxieties about the first day of school.
3. Read the book to the class.
4. Ask students to compare the real and the imagined Mrs. Green by using a Venn diagram, listing the qualities of each Mrs. Green.
5. Even though there are other books in this series (*The Principal From the Black Lagoon*, *The Gym Teacher from the Black Lagoon* and others), do not introduce these books until after the activity has been completed.
6. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Each group will select another education, sports, or childcare professional to describe. Possible choices include:
 - a. P.E. Teacher
 - b. Librarian

- c. Principal
 - d. Day Care Worker
 - e. Soccer Coach
 - f. Music Teacher
 - g. School Nurse
 - h. Piano or ballet Instructor
 - i. Baby sitter
7. Each group will list five *nightmarish* qualities of the professional they have chosen or been assigned. One student in the group should also draw that person.
 8. The groups will also list five qualities of the *perfect* professional they have chosen. One student in the group will draw that person.
 9. At the end of the allotted time (10-20 minutes), each group will report on the “*professional* from the Black Lagoon”, and the “*professional* from Utopia.” Pictures may be displayed on a bulletin board.
 10. Each student will then write a letter to a real person in their lives who most fits the “utopian” or perfect model. This could be a coach, a Sunday School teacher, any school personnel, baby sitter or even a parent, grandparent or sibling. The letter should thank that person for the positive characteristics displayed. Letters may be taken home to be mailed.
 11. As a follow-up, read one of the other books in this series, comparing what this author wrote to the students’ ideas. These books are available in most school libraries.

<p>Extension Activity: Students may write a short paragraph describing what they think this school year will be like, including their first impressions of the teacher, the classroom atmosphere, their classmates, and the content to be learned. These paragraphs will be held in a “time capsule” until the end of the year, at which time, they will be reread and compared to how the school year actually unfolded.</p>
