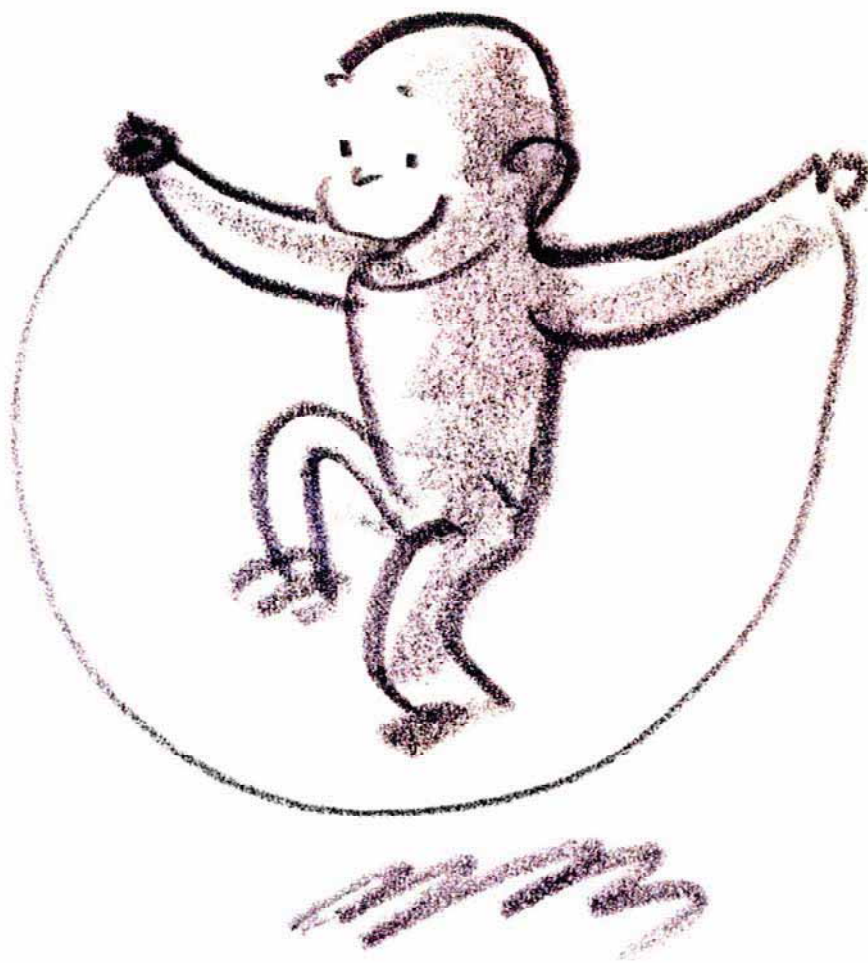


# Curious George Saves the Day

The Art of Margret and H.A. Rey

*Curriculum Materials for Educators*



artculture  
+ education

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## INTRODUCTION

Margret and H.A. Rey's children's books about America's beloved monkey Curious George hold a special place in the hearts of both children and adults around the world. This resource for educators is designed to complement and enhance a classroom study of the Reys' Curious George stories.

Developed for educators to use with young children, the resource provides discussion questions, activities, and lessons for an in-depth study of selected Curious George stories and may be adapted for various grade levels.

These curriculum materials also provide insight into the lives of George's remarkable creators.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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These curriculum materials were inspired by an exhibition of nearly eighty original drawings and preparatory dummies for the children's books of Margret and H.A. Rey on view at The Jewish Museum March 14 - August 1, 2010. The exhibition *Curious George Saves the Day: The Art of Margret and H.A. Rey* is supported through a bequest from the Estate of Lore Ross. WNET.ORG is the media sponsor. This publication has been made possible by a grant from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

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Front cover: H. A. Rey, unpublished drawing, United States, c. 1950s-60s, pencil on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.

# The Reys

The character Curious George and the original seven illustrated books about his adventures—and misadventures—were created by the husband-and-wife team of Margret and H. A. Rey.

Born Hans Augusto Reyersbach on September 16, 1898, in Hamburg, Germany, H. A. Rey became interested in animals and drawing at an early age. Going to both the zoo (he grew up near the world-renowned Hagenbeck Zoo) and the circus as a child, he had frequent exposure to the antics of live animals. H. A. Rey was also a self-taught artist. He was able to combine his interests in animals and art early in his career when he landed a job as a poster designer for a circus.

Margret was born Margarete Elisabeth Waldstein on May 16, 1906, also in Hamburg. She received formal art training at the esteemed Bauhaus School in Dessau and the Düsseldorf Art Academy. Margret developed interests in photography and writing and, later in life, pottery and needlepoint. She worked in advertising and in photographic studios in Germany and England during the late 1920s through the early 1930s.

Margret and H. A. Rey first met in Germany, as family friends, when Margret was a young girl. They were to become much better acquainted years later, in 1935, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. H. A. Rey had settled there in 1925 and was selling

bathtubs as part of a family business. Margret Rey immigrated there ten years afterward to find work and escape the hostile political climate in Germany.

Both Margret and H. A. Rey were German Jews. Adolf Hitler's rise to power and appointment as chancellor of Germany in 1933 had created an increasingly dangerous environment for Jews living in that country. Margret relocated to Brazil, in part, to distance herself from this situation.

Margret and H. A. Rey were married in Rio on August 16, 1935. Margret persuaded H. A. Rey to leave the family business, and before long, the two were pursuing professional projects together, including founding one of Rio's first advertising agencies.

Though the character Curious George was still years away from being created, the Reys were accumulating experiences that probably served as inspiration for the monkey protagonist. While living in Rio, Margret and H. A. Rey had pet marmosets, monkeys indigenous to Brazil. Additionally, H. A. Rey had opportunities to sketch monkeys in the Brazilian wildlife.

The couple visited Paris in 1936 for their honeymoon and decided to remain there, turning what was to be a few weeks' sojourn into a four-year residence.

It was in Paris that the Reys began working on children's books. A French publisher had spotted H. A. Rey's newspaper cartoons of a giraffe and encouraged him to use the character as the protagonist for a children's book. This giraffe became the title character of *Raffy and the 9 Monkeys* (*Cecily G. and the 9 Monkeys* in the American edition), published in 1939. This is the book in which Curious George (the youngest of the nine monkeys and then known as Fifi) makes his debut. After *Raffy and the 9 Monkeys* was published, the Reys decided they would make Curious George the protagonist of their next book.

In all, the Reys published seven books during their years in Paris and also completed the manuscripts and drawings for at least four other books that would later be published in America, including *Curious George*.

The Curious George books were a true collaboration between Margret and H. A. Rey. Their creative process was complex, but for the most part, H. A. Rey was in charge of illustrations and the overall idea for the story while Margret developed the plot and wrote the text.

During the time the Reys were working on the first Curious George book, the political situation in Europe was rapidly deteriorating. In 1939, Germany invaded Poland, marking the start of World War II. France declared war on Germany within days, and soon the Reys felt the war looming heavily over them. The couple moved

temporarily to the Château Feuga, a castle in Southern France owned by friends, to remove themselves from the anxiety of living in the capital. After an extended stay there, they returned to Paris but then left for Avranches in Normandy, in the spring of 1940. When they returned to Paris later that spring, it was with a plan to escape France for good before the Nazis took power there.

The Reys' preoccupation with journeying elsewhere to escape their situation certainly found its way into the Curious George narrative, as well as into the other stories they were working on during this time period.

The couple decided they would relocate to New York City, as Margret's sister was living near the city at the time. After working hard to secure all the necessary paperwork and plan their route of departure from Europe, the couple found themselves unable to leave Paris via train. They decided their only option was to leave on bicycle, but the only bicycle they could procure was a tandem. After practicing on the tandem, however, they realized this was not going to be a viable option for them. They returned the bike and exchanged it for spare bicycle parts that H. A. Rey used to cobble together two individual bicycles.

Early on the morning of June 12, 1940, the Reys left Paris for good on their makeshift bikes. Included in the very little baggage they took with them were several manuscripts. While the original manuscript and perhaps sample illustrations for

Curious George had already been sent off safely to America for prospective publication, the Reys carried with them the final artwork for the illustrations.

The Reys' escape was a narrow one: The Nazis entered Paris just two days after the couple had fled on their bicycles.

The couple rode their bicycles for three long days, later boarding a train to reach the French-Spanish border. Along the way, they bedded at a farmhouse, in cow stables, and on the floor of a restaurant.

From the French-Spanish border, the Reys were able to travel by train across Spain and then through Portugal to Lisbon. From there, they made their way to Brazil by boat and then, a couple of months later, on to New York City, also by boat.

Four months after leaving Paris, the Reys settled in New York's Greenwich Village, making it their home for the next twenty-three years. They then moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where they resided for the rest of their lives.

*Curious George* was published by the American publisher Houghton Mifflin in 1941, a year after the Reys' arrival in the United States. (This quick timetable was due, in part, to the fact that Grace Hogarth, who had worked for the Reys' British

publisher and also fled war-torn Europe, had secured a position at Houghton Mifflin.)

Over the next twenty-five years, the Reys wrote six more *Curious George* stories.

The Reys were also prolific beyond the *Curious George* series. In total, the husband-and-wife team authored and illustrated more than thirty books, most of them for children. They each were involved with a variety of other creative professional pursuits as well, including less collaborative, more independent projects.

H. A. Rey passed away in 1977, and Margret Rey died in 1996, but their legacy is alive and well. With translations in more than fifteen languages, *Curious George* is today enjoyed by children around the world.

***Please note:***

Although all seven *Curious George* books were co-created by Margret and H. A. Rey, Margret's authorship is only acknowledged on the final three books.

As Margret Rey once explained, "When we first came to America, our publisher suggested we use my husband's name because the children's book field was so dominated by women. They thought it would sell better. After a time, I thought, 'Why the devil did I do that?' so since then my name has appeared also."



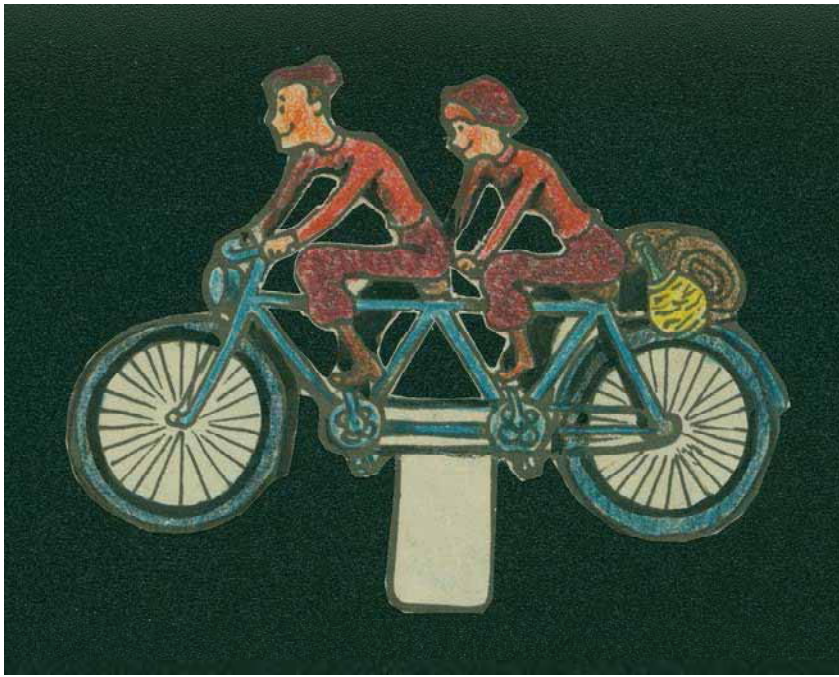
## *Margret and H.A. Rey at a book signing, United States, c. 1945*

This photograph features the Reys, both of them mugging and posing for the camera. Margret sits at a desk, pausing between autographing books, while H. A. Rey is caught mid-drawing—simultaneously sketching with both hands! He is drawing on a chalkboard that is white with erasures. He may have been drawing for the children in an almost performative way—drawing, erasing, and then drawing anew so the children can observe the artistic process.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you see in this photograph?
- ◆ At what type of event might this photograph have been taken?  
How can you tell?
- ◆ What can you tell about the mood at this event from the facial expressions of Margret and H. A. Rey and the children?
- ◆ What do you notice about the way H. A. Rey is drawing?
- ◆ Why might the photographer have chosen to capture Margret at the desk and H. A. Rey at the chalkboard?

The kangaroos on the board are reminiscent of the kangaroos from the zoo in the original *Curious George* tale; those in the animal show in *Curious George Rides a Bike*; and even the kangaroo protagonist of *Katy no-Pocket* (1944), a book illustrated by H. A. Rey and written by Emmy Payne. Here there are two sets of mothers and joeys, facing each other, as if mirror images of one another.



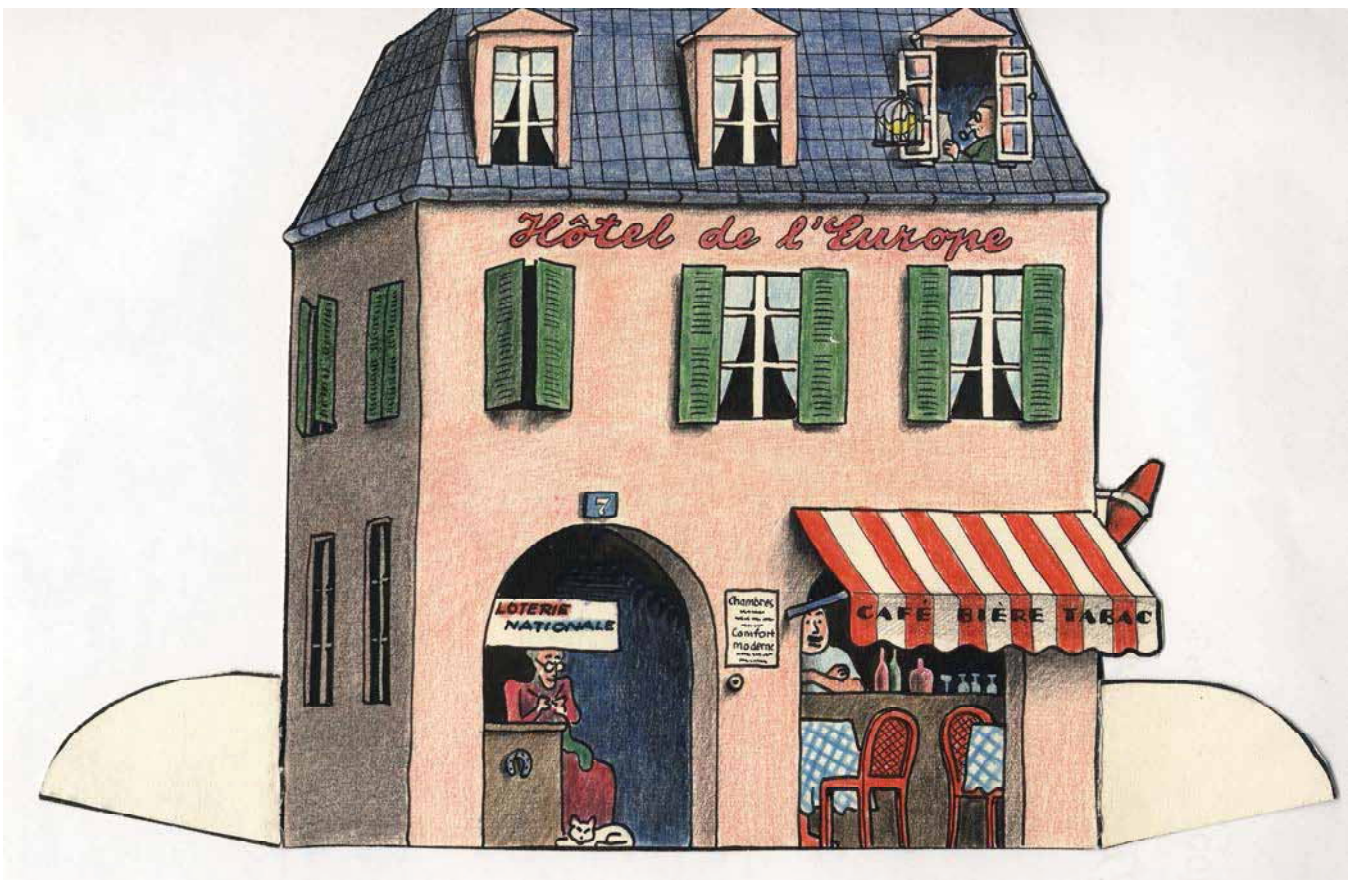
## *Découpages à colorer (unpublished), Paris, c. 1938*

This image, drawn in pen, ink, color pencil and crayon on paper, features a man and a woman riding a tandem bicycle. It is one of H. A. Rey's cutouts from *La Rue: Découpages à colorer*, a never-published French-language book. Attired in matching outfits, the couple in this illustration bears some resemblance to Margret and H. A. Rey at the time the picture was drawn in the late 1930s.

Coincidentally, this tandem bicycle image predates an important instance in the Reys' personal history that involved a tandem bike. When the Reys fled Paris in 1940, they originally procured a tandem bike to ride out of town. They had so much trouble riding it that H. A. Rey went back to the bicycle shop and exchanged the tandem for spare parts that he used to cobble together two separate bikes.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What art materials does it look like H. A. Rey used to create this artwork?
- ◆ What shapes do you see in this artwork?
- ◆ What do you notice about the riders' clothes?



## *Découpages à colorer (unpublished), Paris, c. 1938*

This is an illustration of a hotel, also from *La Rue: Découpages à colorer*. The architecture includes arched doorways on the ground floor, rectangular windows with shutters on the second floor, and dormer windows projecting out of a sloped roof on the top floor. There are several characters in the composition: a female lottery-ticket vendor at the lower left; a bartender at the lower right; and a man in one of the top-floor windows. With his glasses and pipe, this man bears a striking resemblance to the artist and may in fact be a self-portrait of H. A. Rey.

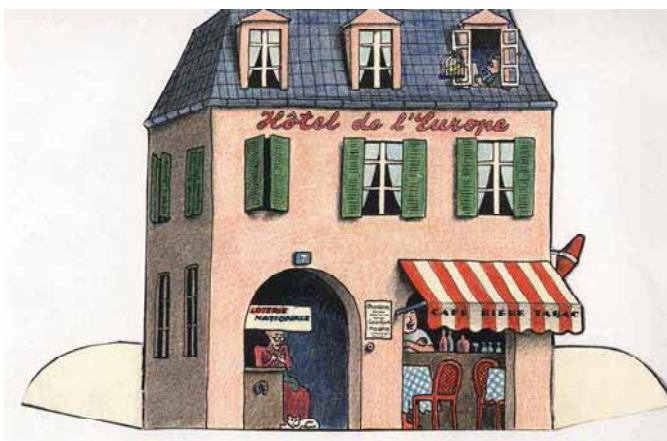
While by no means a faithful rendering of the Terrass Hotel, where the Reys lived for four years in Paris—from 1936 to mid-1940 (the same period during which this image was drawn)—this illustration could very well have been inspired by the hotel. The Reys intended to stay at the hotel for a few weeks at the end of their honeymoon, but they ended up staying there for much longer. This was possible because the family-owned Terrass's Hotel, built in 1912, had both traditional hotel rooms and apartment residences.

The Reys made the hotel their home for four years (with the exception of an extended stay in the south of France and another in the north).

Certain features of the architecture in the illustration are reminiscent of the Terrass's design, including the arched openings on the ground floor.

The Terrass Hotel was commandeered by the Nazis in June 1940 (shortly after the Reys had fled Paris) and occupied by them until August of 1944.

The hotel is still in operation today.



H. A. Rey, découpage for *La Rue: Découpages à colorer* (unpublished), Paris, c. 1938, pen and ink, color pencil, and crayon on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Describe the various features of the building.
- ◆ Describe the different characters and their gestures.
- ◆ How many animals do you see in the picture?
- ◆ How is this building similar to or different from those in your own neighborhood?

# Lessons and Activities



## IT'S ALL ABOUT TEAMWORK!

Riding a tandem bicycle requires *teamwork*. Both riders need to pedal and maintain balance in order to move forward. And they need to agree on when to start and stop.

- ◆ As a class, create a word web diagram of the word teamwork on the board. Encourage your students to think about all the ideas and experiences they associate with teamwork.
- ◆ Using ideas generated from this word web or elsewhere, ask your students to write about and/or illustrate an occasion when they have relied on teamwork.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF A BICYCLE BUILT FOR TWO

- ◆ Discuss with your students what a symbol is. In addition to discussing the definition, explore examples of symbols that relate to books you have read in class.
- ◆ Discuss how a tandem bike might function as a symbol. How might this symbolism relate to the *Curious George* books?

Even though the Reys were not able to successfully ride a tandem bicycle, the tandem bike is an apt symbol for their creative collaboration on the *Curious George* books. A tandem bike can also function as a symbol for the “teamwork” required of the text and illustrations to work together to tell the *Curious George* tales.

- ◆ Ask your students to think of other objects that could be symbols of teamwork. Have them make drawings or collages of these objects.
- ◆ Alternatively or in addition to exploring the notion of teamwork, you might ask your students to create symbols for other class room or community values that you have previously discussed.

# How was Curious George Created?

## FIFI THE MONKEY

Fifi the monkey, later renamed Curious George, made his first appearance in the Reys' first children's book, originally titled *Raffy and the 9 Monkeys* (1939). The main character, a lonely giraffe, befriends nine monkeys who become her playmates. Fifi is the youngest of her monkey friends.

The Reys set about writing this book and thus entering the world of children's literature at the encouragement of a French editor named Jacques Schiffrin. Schiffrin, who worked for the famous publishing house in Paris called Gallimard, had seen H. A. Rey's cartoons of a giraffe in a Paris periodical and suggested that the Reys turn the giraffe into a children's story character. It was upon *Raffy's* publication that the Reys decided that Fifi deserved his own picture book, and they started work on it in 1939. *Curious George* was likely in process by the time the Reys reached Château Feuga, and H. A. Rey finished the illustrations after the couple returned to Paris in January 1940.

While the Reys' editor in England expressed great interest in publishing *Fifi: The Adventures of a Monkey* in 1940, the impending Nazi bombing of Britain and new restrictions on the importation of books from France made that an impossibility.

Instead, the manuscript was sent to a publishing agent in the United States in the early spring of 1940, with the final illustrations only making their way to the states when the Reys arrived with them in the fall of that year.

French and British audiences were thus introduced to Fifi in 1939 when *Raffy and the 9 Monkeys* was first published in those countries. However, since *Curious George's* 1941 publication in the United States preceded that of the retitled *Cecily G. and the 9 Monkeys*, when American audiences were first introduced to George, he was already a main character of his own tale.

In spite of H. A. Rey's frequent exposure to live monkeys—at the zoo, at the circus, in the wild, and as pets—there is one particularly notable absence in the rendering of George and the other eight monkeys in *Raffy*: They have no tails! When questioned about the artistic license he took, H. A. Rey replied that his monkey characters are a cross between a gibbon and an ape, adding that when he first drew the story of *Raffy*, “the giraffe's long neck and legs plus tails of all nine little monkeys made the drawings look like spaghetti!”

## WHAT HAPPENED TO GEORGE WHEN THE REYS ARRIVED IN NEW YORK CITY? HOW WAS HE TRANSFORMED?

Before publication in the United States, Fifi underwent several transformations, first and foremost, getting a new name that would appeal to an American audience: Curious George.

Back in France, H. A. Rey had created color illustrations (in watercolor) for *Curious George*. Many American publishers at the time, however, required their illustrators to submit pre-separated artwork for their books in an effort to keep printing costs down. This meant that for each illustration the artist had to create a drawing for each of the four colors of ink used in color printing (black, blue, red, and yellow). Printer's plates were then created from these separations. When printed on the same page, the colors overlap and blend to create the desired colors. In keeping with this practice, H. A. Rey was asked to create separations for *Curious George*, meaning that his original watercolors were not used in the 1941 edition.

While recreating the *Curious George* illustrations, Rey adapted his style to the American publishing practice of requiring pre-separated artwork, the result being less painterly, more linear images.

It was only in 1998 that Houghton Mifflin published *The Original Curious George* with H. A. Rey's original watercolors.

The fact that Margret Rey is not cited as an author until publication of *Curious George Flies a Kite*, the fifth *Curious George* book (published in 1958), is a direct consequence of the books being published in the United States. In the early 1940s, most children's books were created by women. The Reys' American publisher thought that releasing their books under H. A. Rey's name only would help promotion and increase sales since having a male author was more unusual.

The Reys' immigration to the United States also had an impact on *Curious George* storylines. In the last six *Curious George* books, George often gets to live out archetypal "American dream" fantasies: he lands an acting job in Hollywood, advances scientific research by traveling in a spaceship, and gets his fifteen minutes of fame on the front page of many newspapers.

## THE ORIGINAL CURIOUS GEORGE STORY

This is how readers are introduced to the title character in the first *Curious George* book:

*This is George.*

*He lived in Africa.*

*He was a good little monkey  
and always very curious.*

These lines reveal the main character's name, where he is from, and his most prominent traits. The illustration on the facing page provides the first image of George and his nearly constant smile.

Throughout the tale, the text and illustrations work together to tell the story. Sometimes they reinforce each other; sometimes the illustrations show what is not told; and sometimes the writing reveals information that cannot be easily communicated through images.

Together, the words and images tell the story of a monkey taken from Africa by a man with a yellow hat to a new homeland across the sea. After spending some time at the house of the man with the yellow hat and then some time in jail, George finally finds a new home at the zoo. Of course, there are adventures and mishaps along the way, mostly thanks to George's ceaseless curiosity, but ultimately, George finds himself happy in his new home.

In this first *Curious George* tale, the monkey's narrow escape from danger is already a recurrent theme—he is saved from near drowning; he

escapes from jail; and he escapes his predicament of being carried off by a bundle of balloons. While this book was written before the Reys escaped from war-torn Europe, it is likely that the theme of escape was already very much on their minds.

The concept of “saving the day,” however, only appears in the later *Curious George* books, those written and illustrated by the Reys after their safe arrival in America. This concept seems to have developed directly from the important role that the character had played in saving the Reys' lives when fleeing Nazi Europe. Twice in 1939–40, during the early war years, the Reys raised the suspicions of local authorities—once at Château Feuga and once at the French-Spanish border. When illustrations for their children's books were found among their possessions, the Reys were cleared of these suspicions. Their artwork also provided proof of their occupations when it was time to obtain American visas. Furthermore, the popular and financial success of the *Curious George* books helped the Reys rebuild their careers and establish themselves in this country.

Many who knew or have researched *Curious George's* creators point out some autobiographical aspects of the main characters in the books. The man with the yellow hat explores the jungles of Africa, which is not unlike H. A. Rey, who probably explored the jungles of Brazil while traveling up and down the Amazon selling goods. George's spunk and curiosity are traits often attributed to Margret Rey.



*George climbed up until he was in the sunshine again, high above the rain cloud.*

In this illustration from *Raffi and the 9 Monkeys*, we see George clinging onto Raffy's long neck. Unlike his siblings and mother below, George has escaped the rain by riding aloft his giraffe friend's long neck, high above the rain cloud. He celebrates his escape from the bad weather with a triumphant gesture. The eight monkeys below shield themselves with umbrellas as they run for cover. Several of the other monkeys' faces are visible from beneath their umbrellas: one looks displeased; one is smiling; and one, who seems to have spotted George above, responds with his mouth agape. Not only is it raining, but since the rain is falling at a diagonal, it must also be windy. The dominant colors in the composition are the orange of Raffy's spots and the blue fur of the monkeys. These colors are complementary, opposite one another on the color wheel, creating strong color contrasts in the picture.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What animals do you see in this picture?
- ◆ What is the total number of figures you see?
- ◆ Describe the expressions on the different characters' faces. Try to imitate their expressions.
- ◆ How does the artist show that the monkeys with umbrellas are running?

H. A. Rey, final illustration for "George climbed up until he was in the sunshine again, high above the rain cloud," *Raffi and the 9 Monkeys* (1939), later published as *Cecily G. and the 9 Monkeys* (1942), Paris, 1939, watercolor on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.



This page includes two images that illustrate a single page of text in the published book. The two images take on an almost comic-strip quality, showing a succession of moments. The first image shows the first encounter between the man in the yellow hat and George. The man looks off in the distance, using his binoculars to check out George. He also has a camera and a rifle as accessories. George is swinging from a vine, repeating the motif from the previous illustration in the book in which the reader first meets George. In the second image, H. A. Rey has zoomed in on the landscape a bit. George has approached the yellow hat with an interested expression. For emphasis, the hat lies outside the irregular border of the image. The man crouches behind a tree, looking on with a grin.

*One Day George  
saw a man.  
He had a large  
yellow straw hat.*

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What is similar about these two pictures? What is different?
- ◆ Why might H. A. Rey have decided to include these two pictures on one page in the published book?
- ◆ How is using two images together like this similar to a comic strip? How is it different?
- ◆ Describe the setting in these two illustrations.
- ◆ Describe the types of lines the artist uses in these pictures. How many different types of lines do you see?
- ◆ How does the artist show that George is very far away in the first picture?
- ◆ Describe the poses of the man and George. Can you recreate them?
- ◆ Notice how the pictures have irregular borders. Why might the artist have made this choice?
- ◆ Think about what might happen next in this narrative. If there were a third image included here, what would it depict?

H. A. Rey, final illustration for "One day George saw a man. He had on a large yellow straw hat," published in *The Original Curious George* (1998), France, 1939–40, watercolor, charcoal, and color pencil on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.

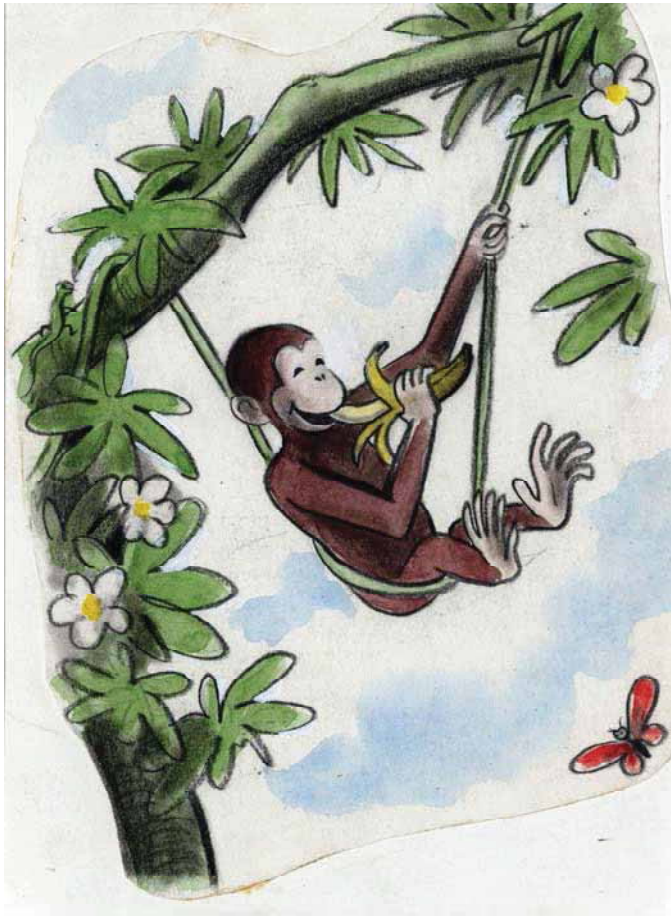
# *George and the Hat*

Please refer to the title page in the published version of the *Curious George* book.

This is the title page of the *Curious George* book. It communicates the book's title, the author and illustrator's name, and information about the publisher, all in hand-lettered text. Readers also get a peak at the illustrated story that will unfold inside the book. Near the center of the page, the reader sees George approaching the yellow hat with curiosity. Interestingly, this illustration is not identical to the one it resembles within the story itself. In this one, the shadows are more pronounced, giving the image more contrast, and many subtle details have changed: George's toes, the contour of his belly, the shape of his face, and even the prominence of the tufts of grass.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ This is the title page of the *Curious George* book. Why do you think this image was chosen for the title page? Do you think it was a good choice? Why or why not?
- ◆ Describe George's expression.
- ◆ What do you think George is about to do?
- ◆ Many young readers do not yet know how to read cursive. Why do you think cursive was used on the title page?



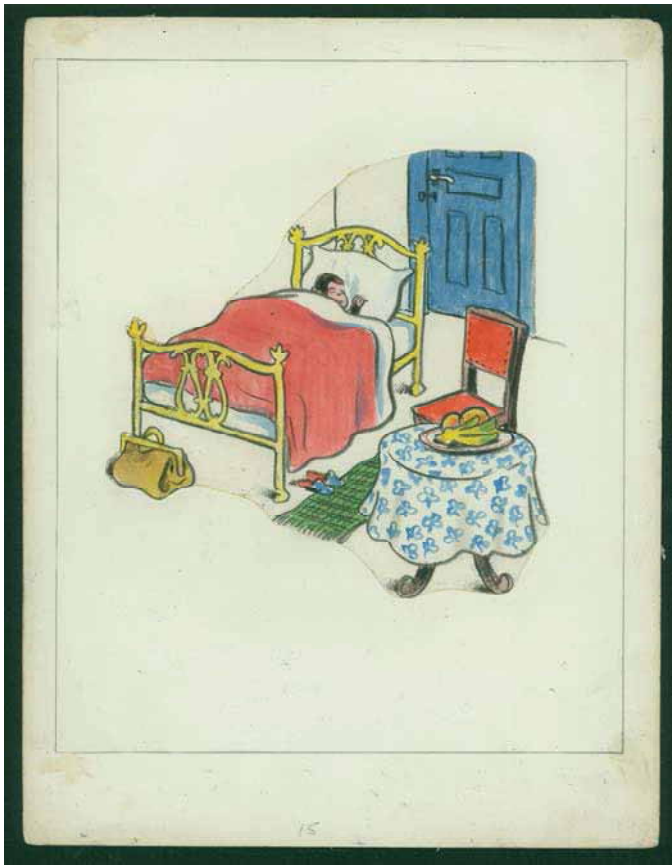
## *This is George. He lived in Africa.*

This is the first image associated with the Curious George story. In the published book, the related text on the facing page occupies a fraction of the page while this image nearly fills its page. H. A. Rey's handling of the line quality is very fluid. The various elements of the setting—the trunk, branch, tufts of foliage, and band of pale blue sky below George—frame the composition. The lower left to upper right diagonal of the tree branch supporting the swing is echoed by the diagonal band of blue sky below George and again in the diagonal orientation of the butterfly's wingspan. The charcoal H. A. Rey uses for the linear elements of the image gives texture to the drawing. Artists often repeat forms in an image to keep the viewer's eye moving. Here, the shape of the banana echoes the shape of George's feet and, to some extent, even the shapes of the palm fronds.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ In what ways does George look like a real monkey? In what ways does he not look like a real monkey?
- ◆ Using facial expressions, describe all the characters in this picture.
- ◆ Artists often repeat elements of their drawings over and over again. Where in this drawing do you see a shape/form or type of line used more than once?
- ◆ Read the accompanying text in the published book to your students. Which parts of the writing are illustrated? Which are not? What things do we see in the picture that we did not read about?

H. A. Rey, final illustration for "This is George. He lived in Africa," published in *The Original Curious George* (1998), France, 1939–40, watercolor, charcoal, and color pencil on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.



## *He crawled into bed and fell asleep at once*

Here, we see George behaving like a human being. He is sleeping in a bed, has apparently just removed his slippers at the bedside, and appears to have a suitcase of belongings at the foot of his bed. Still, we see bananas on his table—reminding us of how we first met him in the jungle, chomping on a banana.

The top of the door is cropped off, which focuses our attention on what is going on inside the room instead of what may be happening beyond the door. The palette H. A. Rey uses is mostly primary colors, accented with some green, black, and brown. It has been noted that the room depicted here may bear some connection to the Reys' apartment at the Terrass Hotel in Paris, where the couple was living at the time H. A. Rey created this illustration.

Look at the related image and text in the published *Curious George* book. Here the text and image are laid out so that after reading the text, the reader's eyes move over to the adjacent page and find themselves exactly at the protagonist's snoozing head.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you notice about the colors the artist uses in this illustration?
- ◆ Where do you see the artist using patterns?
- ◆ Where do you see the artist using overlapping shapes?
- ◆ Why do you think the artist cropped off the top part of the door?

H. A. Rey, final illustration for "He crawled into bed and fell asleep at once," published in *The Original Curious George* (1998), France, 1939–40, watercolor, charcoal, and color pencil on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.

# Activities & Lessons

## BEFORE AND AFTER

Please refer to the title page in the published version of the *Curious George* book.

The “George and the Yellow Hat” image on the title page makes the reader curious. We may wonder, for example, how the hat ended up with the monkey or what the monkey is going to do with the hat.

- ◆ Before reading the book, ask your students what they think might happen in the plot immediately before this moment and what might happen immediately after. Ask them to draw a “before” and an “after” illustration to extend this part of the narrative.

## SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

Discuss definitions of synonyms and antonyms with your students. As a group, brainstorm some examples of synonym/antonym pairs.

Print out the last page of this document, titled “Synonyms & Antonyms Worksheet.” The text included in this worksheet appears along with the “One day George saw a man” illustrations in the published book. Note the blank spaces in the second and third sections of the worksheet each time the following adjectives appear in the text: *large, nice, little, curious*.

- ◆ In the second section, ask your students to provide a synonym for each adjective in the original text.
- ◆ In the third section, ask your students to provide antonyms.
- ◆ Ask your students to draw their own version of the illustrations to reflect the antonym version of the storyline.

## ONE WORD, TWO MEANINGS

For its publication in England, *Curious George* had to be retitled yet again. In England, George became Zozo as it was deemed inappropriate for a mischievous monkey to share a name with the reigning king of England, George VI. Once the character became better known internationally, however, Grace Hogarth, the editor at Houghton Mifflin, suggested that Zozo be changed to Curious George to benefit English sales of the books. Hogarth stated that she had later “learned from the British publisher the fact that ‘curious’ was not an adjective except in the sense of ‘odd.’”

Depending on the context, *curious* can mean (1) marked by a desire to investigate; marked by inquisitive interest; or (2) odd; strange; unexpected (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

- ◆ Ask students to come up with other adjectives that have two (or more) meanings.
- ◆ Ask your students to make a diptych (dual image) illustration of the two definitions of their word.

## Curious George Continues

Illustrated books have the distinct advantage and unique challenge of telling a story through both words and images. The text and illustrations must work in tandem to guide the reader through the story, develop the characters, describe setting, and create mood.

In the case of husband and wife and creative collaborators Margret and H. A. Rey, H. A. Rey often generated the ideas and illustrated the stories while Margret fleshed out the ideas and wrote the texts. Their literary and artistic partnership was nuanced and complex. Different drafts of their book projects reveal that sometimes images and text were developed concurrently, and sometimes they were not.

The process of bringing an illustrated book from conception to library or bookstore shelf is a long one. Ideas for the tale must be developed from outline form through multiple written drafts, until the final text is created. The revisions made along the way might not come just from the author but may also be in response to the editor's reactions and comments. Heading down a parallel path, illustrations begun as rough sketches, often just in pencil or charcoal, are developed into drawings, and, in the case of *Curious George*, then become final multi-media illustrations (using painting and drawing media). Just as authors have to be at

tentive to diction and syntax, illustrators must be aware of formal elements (color, line, and shape) and composition. Both must make such decisions regarding what details to include and what point-of-view to adopt.

After the visual and literary content has been finalized, there are many other steps necessary to create the final book. The text must be typeset. Dummies, or mock-ups, may be created, whereby the text is inserted (these days, on the computer) onto the appropriate place on the illustration.

Among other things, dummies allow a book's author and illustrator to view double-page spreads. The artist and author can get a better sense of how the layout and composition will work if they can view adjacent pages. This is especially important when two pages share a single image or when text on one page relates to the image on the adjacent page. Even if a single page contains text and its related illustration, it is still important to see how that image will work with the next image in the story. It is interesting to note that in the original *Curious George* book, all the text is on the left-hand pages while all the images appear on the right-hand pages. This is not the case in the later books, where images often have double-page spreads and text and image together on a single page.

Once approved by the publisher, the final text and image layouts go to the printer so the books can be mass-produced for the public. In the case of the first *Curious George* book, as discussed above, H. A. Rey had to redraw each individual illustration into four color separations in preparation for printing.

Furthermore, he actually created an entirely new set of color separations, probably in the late 1950s, for a new edition of the book published in 1963.

Illustrations, like any artwork, rely on formal elements such as line, shape, color, texture, balance, and rhythm. Beyond creating visual interest, these elements help us “read” the image. In English, we know to read from left to right, but an illustrator has to coax our eyes into thoroughly exploring and “reading” his or her image and can only use visual elements to do this. H. A. Rey, for example, guides the reader’s eyes with color cues (for example, a viewer’s eye might bounce around from one red element to another); directional cues (a character’s pointed finger, for example, or a triangular-object “pointing” in a certain direction); and the implied motion of a character’s action.

While a series of illustrations may not tell the entire story—after all, that is not the intention—a successful illustration should be able to stand on its own as an artwork, creating a visually engaging experience, even in the absence of the related text.



## At breakfast George's friend said

After George flees the zoo in *Curious George Takes a Job* (1947), we learn in *Curious George Rides a Bike* (1952) that he has moved in with the man with the yellow hat. When the latter story opens, the reader encounters George waking up in the man's house. He has breakfast with the man, and the reader learns that it is the three-year anniversary of George's being taken from the jungle.

In the breakfast scene illustration, seen here as a black color separation, George and the man are shown in profile, looking at each other across a table. The breakfast spread includes typical human fare—cereal, a jug of milk, juice, jam, and coffee—but also George's signature banana. The facial expressions of George and the man lend a cheery mood to the picture. The only indication of background space is a framed picture hanging on the wall behind and above the table.

The picture shows an image of the day referenced in the dialogue that appears below this illustration in the published book: the day the man and George first met. In this picture-within-a-picture, we see George spotting the yellow hat and the caption "George in the Jungle." Looking back at the very first image of the man in the yellow hat, from the original *Curious George* book, we see that he did indeed have a camera with him, so the framed image is probably intended to represent a photograph. The man's arm is outstretched, pointing toward this photograph. Not only does it direct George's attention, but it also directs the reader's eyes. Interestingly, in the published book, the blank white wall on which the framed picture hangs fluidly transitions into the white background for the text—there is no framing device used for the overall illustration.

H. A. Rey, black color separation for "At breakfast George's friend said," *Curious George Rides a Bike* (1952), watercolor and charcoal on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ In what ways does this breakfast table look similar to or different from your breakfast table?
- ◆ If you were to add colors to this image, which colors would you add and where? Remember, artists often like to balance their colors, meaning they like to make sure each color appears in several different areas of a picture. Check out the full-color printed illustration on page 4 of *Curious George Rides a Bike*. How do your choices compare to H. A. Rey's color choices?
- ◆ What do you notice about the picture hanging on the wall? Why might the man with the yellow hat have chosen to hang up this picture? Why might H. A. Rey have decided to include it in this illustration?

H. A. Rey, black color separation for "At breakfast George's friend said," *Curious George Rides a Bike* (1952), watercolor and charcoal on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.

# *Watching his fleet sailing down the river George felt like an admiral*

Please refer to pages 20 and 21 of  
*Curious George Rides a Bike* (1952).

This is a dynamic image filled with movement and many details. In a busy composition such as this, artists often include visual cues to guide the looking experience. Here, the overall movement of the viewer's eyes is from upper left to lower right, following the movement of the water, boats, and ducks. But H. A. Rey needed to balance this in order to keep the reader's eyes on the page. By including a bunny jumping off toward the left, which causes George to glance over toward the left, and having George's bag blow backward in the wind toward the left, H. A. Rey is able to keep the viewer's eyes engaged by the elements beyond the activity in the river. Additionally, the artist has created an X structure to the composition of this double-page spread. The main path of eye movement along the diagonal of the river is balanced and stabilized by an intersecting, criss-crossing diagonal created by connecting two other very important elements of the page: the text and George himself.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ How many types of insects do you see in this illustration?
- ◆ How many types of animals are there?
- ◆ How many paper boats have passengers?
- ◆ Describe the different poses you see. Imitate your favorite one.
- ◆ Many things in this picture are moving to the right. What objects or living things are moving toward the left?
- ◆ What do you notice about the placement of the text?
- ◆ How does the text's layout relate to the illustration? (Students might notice that the right edge of the body of text goes along a diagonal that roughly parallels the river's edge.)
- ◆ What information does the text reveal that the image does not?



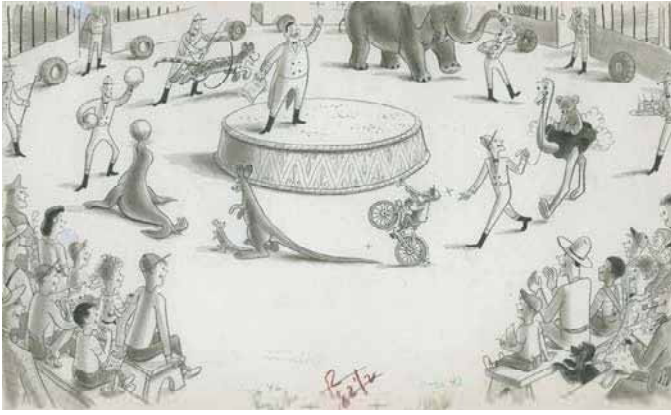
## *Finally the show was on*

The circus setting was one H. A. Rey knew well. He had attended circus performances since childhood and later got a job creating posters for a circus while still living in Hamburg in the early 1920s. While working there, he befriended the performers—humans and animals alike! This personal connection to the circus becomes visually evident in this illustration. At the lower right, one can spot a self-portrait of H. A. Rey—bespectacled, smoking his pipe, artist tools in hand, and drawing George, of course! Sitting near him is a lady with short, curly hair and a dog by her side—this is a portrait of Margret with their dog Charkie.

The action and characters in this illustration are positioned in a series of concentric circles. On the innermost circle is the ringmaster on his podium.

The middle circle is comprised of the performers—the animals and their trainers—with George nearly front and center. Each animal seems to have a smile on its face, and so do all the trainers, with one exception: the elephant trainer's mouth is agape with an expression of surprise, presumably because his charge has just snatched his cap.

H. A. Rey, black color separation for "Finally the show was on," *Curious George Rides a Bike* (1952), watercolor and charcoal on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.



The outermost circle is made up of the audience members seated on benches in the foreground and the animal cages and staff in the background. This image is heavily cropped: people, animals, and cages are cut off at the edges of the full-bleed page, lending it the air of a photographic snapshot. The reader's point-of-view seems to be that of someone in the audience sitting high up in the bleachers, looking down upon the scene.

This image is a black color separation. The final illustration in the published book comprises black, red, blue, and yellow color separation images printed one on top of the other. The perpendicular ruled lines seen at the bottom center of this black color separation image are registration marks that ensured the proper alignment of the color separations when they were printed.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Imagine you are in the audience at this circus. What might you hear?  
What might you smell?
- ◆ List the number of line, color, and/or shape patterns you can find and describe them.
- ◆ What do you notice about the artist's use of shadow in this illustration?
- ◆ How many different types of hats can you find in this image?
- ◆ Imagine you are at the circus. Where must you be sitting to have this point-of-view?
- ◆ Refer to the full-color published illustration on pages 42 and 43 of *Curious George Rides a Bike*. This is the only example in the book where the text reads across the gutter of the spread. What are some benefits of this layout choice? What are some disadvantages?
- ◆ Why might H. A. Rey not have put George at the exact center of the picture (image loss in the gutter, for example)?

H. A. Rey, black color separation for "Finally the show was on," *Curious George Rides a Bike* (1952), watercolor and charcoal on paper. H. A. & Margret Rey Papers, de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, McCain Library and Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi. Curious George, and related characters, created by Margret and H. A. Rey, are copyrighted and trademarked by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. © 2010 by HMH.

## *An hour later the painters came back*

Please refer to pages 26 and 27 of *Curious George Takes a Job* (1947).

Immediately prior to this part of the story, George is working as a window washer on a tall building. As he looks into an apartment being painted, he gets an idea.

“What child in his right mind, with paints or crayons handy, does not feel the urge to fill empty wall space with works of art?” H. A. Rey once said. “I always felt that urge myself strongly and in my earlier years succumbed to it more than once. So, in *Curious George Takes a Job* I had George decorate the walls of a freshly painted apartment—not his own—with jungle scenes. The results were catastrophic.”

In this image, we see George painting a self-portrait—showing himself back in his homeland jungle—directly onto the wall of an apartment. He has already filled up the rest of the walls and drop cloths in the apartment with images of the jungle flora and fauna. George’s style is a little more simplified and cartoon-like than H. A. Rey’s style.

Through the windows, the reader can see only blue sky, reinforcing information provided earlier in the text: this is a high-rise building, with windows looking out onto the open sky, high above the city.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What details do you learn from the text that you do not see in the picture? What details do you see in the picture that you do not read about in the text?
- ◆ How has George transformed the ladder?
- ◆ If you were able to paint an entire room, what would you paint and why? Have you ever made a wall mural? If so, describe what you created.

# *In no time there was a room full of lather*

Please refer to pages 12 and 13 of *Curious George Gets a Medal* (1957).

Margret Rey related the following tale: “Once we heard a biochemist tell how, as a boy, he had made a bargain with his mother to give the kitchen floor a thorough scrubbing in order to get money for a chemistry set. So one day, while his parents were out, he sprinkled the contents of a large package of soap flakes on the floor, pulled the garden hose through the window and turned the water on . . . When I heard that I said ‘Let George do it.’”

In the story, George has just spilled some fountain pen ink. Here, we see the aftermath of his attempt to clean up his mess.

The soap suds fill the room, flow over the window ledge in the background, and seem as though they might spill from the foreground into the reader’s space. The hose twists and turns with the pressure of the water coursing through it. And George is trying to escape the scene by jumping out the window.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Judging from the illustration, what texture does the lather have? Describe the texture of the other objects in the picture.
- ◆ Describe the different types of lines that you see in this illustration.
- ◆ Using George’s reaction as a clue, how do you think George feels about the mess he has created?

# Activities & Lessons

## MOVE!

- ◆ Have a discussion with your students about H. A. Rey's strategies for conveying movement in the drawing titled "Curious George climbed up until he was in the sunshine again . . ." (see the image provided in this packet on page 13).

For example, students may infer that the wind is blowing because the rain is falling at an angle instead of straight down. Or that the eight monkeys are running because we see them mid-stride, almost all of them with only one foot in contact with the ground.

- ◆ Compare this to other drawings referred to in these curriculum materials that show movement in other ways, especially the images of "Watching his fleet sailing down the river George felt like an admiral" (see pages 20 and 21 of the published book *Curious George Rides a Bike*) and "Finally the show was on" (see the image provided in this packet on page 24). In what additional ways does H. A. Rey show movement in these illustrations?
- ◆ Compare these strategies with examples by other visual artists, such as comic strip artists, animators, flipbook artists, and photographers.

## CIRCLES, CIRCLES, EVERYWHERE

- ◆ There are many circles in the illustration "Finally the show was on." Ask your students to find as many as possible (the ring of performers, the ring of the audience, the wheels, the balls, the half-circles of the baseball caps, etc.).
- ◆ Brainstorm a list of shapes on the board. Ask your students to choose one of these shapes and make a drawing that includes that shape at least five times. Encourage them to think of all the objects and spaces that can be that shape. Ask students to include text to describe their image. Remind them to think about layout choices when adding in the text and to plan ahead and leave room for their text.
- ◆ As an alternative or additional activity, have your students use a sheet of vellum or tracing paper to trace all the circles in the "Finally the show was on" illustration. Ask them to then turn the circles into their own abstract art by adding only lines, shapes, and color and perhaps even some texture.

## TEXTURE STUDIES

In H. A. Rey's illustrations, we see the texture of his media—color pencils, crayons, watercolor paint, and charcoals—varying in density and value as they travel over the paper he used. The textural qualities are visible even when reproduced for the printed book illustrations.

The wet medium (watercolor) was applied fluidly to the page and appears smoother in texture, for the most part. The dry media (color pencils, crayons, and charcoal) reveal the subtle texture of the paper more.

As a class, look closely at a selection of images in this packet. Can you guess in which areas H. A. Rey probably used paint? In which areas did he probably use dry media?

- ◆ Have students use an assortment of paper supports to discover the different textures that can be achieved with different drawing and painting media. Encourage them to explore how the same material can create different textures depending on the paper support it is applied to, the pressure they apply when they use the material, and what they are drawing or painting against (desk versus the floor surface, for example).

For further discussion:  
H. A. Rey occasionally creates the illusion of texture through various drawing strategies. As a class, look at “In no time the room was full of lather . . .” and “Finally the show was on.”

- ◆ Ask your students to look for instances where H. A. Rey creates the illusion of texture. How does he do this?

In the illustration “In no time the room was full of lather . . .,” the rounded and bulbous contours (outlines), together with their softly modeled (subtly shaded) forms, tell us that the lather is soft and foamy. Ask students to describe this.

In the illustration “Finally the show was on,” for Charkie, the Reys' cocker spaniel, instead of using his usual smooth contour, H. A. Rey uses many quick and broken lines to convey the dog's silky, soft fur. For the ostrich's feathers, the artist uses a rapid, curlycue line to describe the clumps of fluffy white plumage.

## POETRY OF THE SENSES

As a class, write a poem about “Finally the show was on.”

- ◆ For the first line, call on students one at a time to describe in one or two words what they *see* in the picture.
- ◆ For the second line of the poem, have students share what they would *hear* if they were in the audience at the performance.
- ◆ For the third line, ask students to share what they would *smell* if they were in the picture.
- ◆ For the final line, ask students to share the *emotions* they might have if they were to attend the animal show.
- ◆ Read the poem aloud to your class (or as a class). When you reach the second line, allow your students to provide the appropriate sound effects!

# Resources

<http://bit.ly/aE5KHd>

University of Southern Mississippi Libraries' digital inventory of works by the Reys in their de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, the main repository of the Reys' artwork and related documentary material. You can view images of preliminaries for both illustrations and text, as well as images of some final drawings.

<http://bit.ly/9p8Z0M>

A "virtual tour" of the exhibition *Curious George Comes to Hattiesburg: The Life and Work of H. A. and Margret Rey*. Please note: Use red hyperlinks at lower left of each page to continue navigating through the virtual tour.

<http://to.pbs.org/alM8A2>

Information on the Reys from the PBS website devoted to its *Curious George* television program.

<http://bit.ly/9KVqfe>

Illustrative digital cartoon video about line symmetry designed for young elementary school students.

<http://bit.ly/b5iYBu>

Information on the Reys from Houghton Mifflin's website. Houghton Mifflin is the original and current American publisher of the *Curious George* titles as well as other books created by Margret and H.A. Rey.

<http://bit.ly/bpn560>

The Terrass Hotel's online photo gallery. There are contemporary and historic pictures of the Terrass Hotel in Montmartre, Paris, where the Reys lived between 1936 and 1940.

**Borden, Louise. *The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H. A. Rey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005.**

A book for young readers sharing the narrative of the Reys' personal history, focusing on their escape from France during early World War II. This book contains reproductions of archival photographs of Margret and H. A. Rey, as well as photographs taken by Margret Rey in France. It also includes images of H. A. Rey's journals and important sites relating to the couple's life.

# *Synonyms & Antonyms Worksheet*

## **ORIGINAL TEXT FROM CURIOUS GEORGE**

One day George saw a man.

He had on a **large** yellow straw hat. The man saw George, too.

"What a **nice little** monkey," he thought. "I would like to take him home with me."

He put his hat on the ground and, of course, George was **curious**.

He came down from the tree to look at the **large** yellow hat.

## **FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH SYNONYMS**

One day George saw a man.

He had on a \_\_\_\_\_ yellow straw hat. The man saw George, too.

"What a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ monkey," he thought. "I would like to take him home with me." He put his hat on the ground and, of course, George was \_\_\_\_\_.

He came down from the tree to look at the \_\_\_\_\_ yellow hat.

## **FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH ANTONYMS**

One day George saw a man.

He had on a \_\_\_\_\_ yellow straw hat. The man saw George, too.

"What a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ monkey," he thought. "I would like to take him home with me." He put his hat on the ground and, of course, George was \_\_\_\_\_.

He came down from the tree to look at the \_\_\_\_\_ yellow hat.