



Mordechai's Marble Mix-Up

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities



Mordechai's Marble Mix-Up

Mordechai has a bag of marbles, and he is the best marble player in the third grade.

He has red ones, blue ones, and one big green one that is a swirly cat's eye. He keeps them in a velvet sack. At recess, he draws a circle in the dirt with a stick, and the boys gather around.

"Rules," says Mordechai. "You shoot from the line. If you knock a marble out of the circle, you keep it."

"That's the rule?" asks Yisroel, a boy from the fourth grade.

"That's how we always play."

"Not how we play in my class," says Yisroel. "We play that you only keep it if your shooter stays in the circle too."

"That's not a rule."

"It is in my class."

The two boys glare at each other. The other boys back away.

Mordechai's cheeks go red. "It's my game, so it's my rules."

"It's a shared game," says Yisroel. "So we both get a say."

For a moment, it looks like a fight. Mordechai grips his sack. Yisroel has his fists balled.

Then another boy, Shimmy, steps between them. "Hold on. Hold on.

Everyone's got a different rule. Why don't we figure out one that works for

everybody?"

"How?" asks Mordechai.

"We could vote."

"Or flip a coin," says Yisroel.

"Or we could try both," says Shimmy. "One round with Mordechai's rule. One round with Yisroel's. Then we pick."

The boys nod. It sounds fair.

First, they play Mordechai's way. Mordechai knocks out three marbles in a row and keeps all of them. Yisroel knocks out one. It is quick, and the game is over in a minute.

Then, they play Yisroel's way. This time, the shooter has to stay inside the circle. Mordechai's first shot knocks a marble out, but his shooter rolls away, and he has to give it back. It takes longer, and everyone has to be more careful.

"This is harder," says Mordechai. But he is smiling. "It's more fun, actually."

"It's more fair," says Yisroel. "Everyone has a chance."

"Maybe we use mine for beginners," says Shimmy. "And yours for the big kids."

"Okay," says Mordechai. "Let's call them Easy Rules and Expert Rules."

The next day, the whole class wants to play. Mordechai writes the two sets of rules on a piece of cardboard and nails it to a stake by the circle. Easy

Rules: knock it out, keep it. Expert Rules: knock it out and stay in, and you keep it.

Yisroel brings his own bag. By the end of the week, there are twelve boys with marbles, and four marble circles in the yard.

A teacher walks by and smiles. "Look at this, Mordechai. It's like a little league."

"We needed good rules," says Mordechai. "It's not fun if somebody feels cheated."

"Wise words," says the teacher.

At the end of the week, he gives Yisroel the big green cat's eye marble as a gift. "For helping me make a better game."

Yisroel's eyes go wide. "You sure?"

"I have a lot," says Mordechai. "And it's more fun when you have someone to play with."



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. What is Mordechai's best marble?

2. What do the boys call the two sets of rules?

3. Who suggests trying both ways?

4. What does Mordechai give Yisroel?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Mordechai keeps his marbles in a velvet sack. Fact / Guess
2. Yisroel wants to cheat. Fact / Guess
3. The rules are written on cardboard and nailed to a stake. Fact / Guess
4. Twelve boys play by the end of the week. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. What does Shimmy do to help the boys stop arguing?

2. When have you disagreed about rules?

3. How can you make a game feel fair for everyone?



Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: MARBLES, CIRCLE, RULES, SHOOTER, FAIR, GAME

W	B	W	G	F	K	Y	O	E	A	G
J	E	C	I	R	C	L	E	T	I	O
A	E	A	R	U	L	E	S	U	J	R
R	F	R	C	B	T	Y	J	U	S	I
M	H	Y	B	R	P	V	S	E	H	A
J	M	A	R	B	L	E	S	M	O	F
U	G	B	V	Y	W	N	E	A	O	F
W	U	S	T	E	R	V	Y	G	T	W
A	B	B	W	Y	P	I	D	R	E	E
B	I	Y	E	T	T	Y	D	M	R	H
G	T	D	K	E	S	E	S	D	H	N



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. LARBMES = _____

2. RCCIEL = _____

3. HROTSOE = _____

4. DRRAACOBBD = _____

5. VEVTEL = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"Let's try both and see."

"How about we vote?"

"I want it to be fair for everyone."



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Fair Rules Chart

#	The game	The problem	Our rule
Game 1			
Game 2			
Game 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw the dirt circle with red, blue and green marbles and the cardboard rules sign.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw the dirt circle, marbles, and the cardboard rules sign.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. A big green swirly cat's eye
2. Easy Rules and Expert Rules
3. Shimmy
4. The green cat's eye marble

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: MARBLES, CIRCLE, SHOOTER, CARDBOARD, VELVET

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.