



The Substitute Teacher Surprise

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities

The Substitute Teacher Surprise

On Wednesday morning, there is a stranger at Morah Devorah's desk.

She is a young woman in a bright green sweater and a neat navy tichel. She smiles at the class, but nobody smiles back.

"Good morning, everyone. I'm Morah Atara. I'll be your teacher today. Morah Devorah is out sick."

The class goes quiet. Yoni slides down in his chair. "I don't like substitutes," he whispers to his friend Dovid. "They don't know anything."

"Yeah," whispers Dovid. "They mess up the schedule."

Yoni crosses his arms. This is going to be a terrible day.

Morah Atara stands at the board. "Let's start with a little warm-up. What do you usually do first thing in the morning?"

"Tefillah," says a girl in the front.

"Okay. And then?"

"Math," says Dovid. "But Morah Devorah always starts with a joke."

"A joke?" says Morah Atara, laughing. "I don't know if I have one."

"We can tell you," says Dovid.

Yoni raises his eyebrows. Dovid, who a minute ago was grumbling, is already grinning. He tells a joke about a duck who goes to the doctor. Morah Atara laughs so hard she has to hold the desk.

Yoni feels his arms loosen, just a little.

"All right," she says. "Math time. But let me see. Today, I thought we'd do something a little different. Would you like to try a math mystery?"

"A what?" asks Yoni, forgetting to be grumpy.

She passes out cards. Each card has a clue. "There's a number hidden somewhere in the room," she says. "Each clue gets you closer. But you'll need to solve a math problem to read the next clue."

The class buzzes. They break into groups. Yoni's group has the first card. It says: Add 25 and 17. The answer is where to look next.

"Forty-two!" shouts Yoni. "Look at chair number forty-two!"

They run to a chair taped with a number. Under it is another card.

For forty minutes, the class races around the room, solving problems, finding clues. When they finally get to the last card, Yoni's group finds it taped to the back of the door. It reads: The mystery number is 100. Great teamwork!

"We did it!" Yoni yells.

Morah Atara claps. "You were all wonderful. Not a single person quit."

At lunch, Yoni and Dovid talk about it. "That was actually fun," says Yoni.

"Told you," says Dovid.

"You didn't tell me. You said substitutes mess up the schedule."

Dovid grins. "Okay. But I changed my mind."

At the end of the day, Morah Atara hands each child a sticker. "Thank you for making me feel welcome."

Yoni takes his sticker. "Will you come back?"

"Maybe next time Morah Devorah is out," she says. "Or maybe another day."

"We'll teach you more jokes," says Yoni.

When Morah Devorah returns, she is delighted to hear about the math mystery. "Sounds like a perfect day," she says.

Yoni thinks about it. He was so sure he wouldn't like it. But it turns out to be one of the best days of the year.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. Who is the substitute?

2. What does the class do for math?

3. What is the final number?

4. What does Yoni think at first?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Dovid tells a joke about a duck. Fact / Guess
2. The substitute is mean. Fact / Guess
3. Yoni's group solves $25 + 17$. Fact / Guess
4. Yoni changes his mind by the end. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. Why is Yoni upset at first?

2. What helps the class feel comfortable with a new teacher?

3. When has a change turned out to be fun?

Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: SUBSTITUTE, MYSTERY, CLUES, MATH, JOKE, CHANGE

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



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. CREEATH = _____

2. RSYTMEY = _____

3. LSCUE = _____

4. RTCSKIE = _____

5. DORO = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"Let's give it a chance."

"Welcome! We usually start with a joke."

"That was actually fun."



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Change Chart

#	What changed	What I thought	What really happened
Change 1			
Change 2			
Change 3			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw the class running around solving math clues with numbers taped to chairs.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing. It occupies the central portion of the page below the instructions.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. Morah Atara
2. A math mystery with clues
3. One hundred
4. That it will be a terrible day

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

Scrambled words: TEACHER, MYSTERY, CLUES, STICKER, DOOR

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