

**THE MINIATURE WORLD OF MARVIN AND JAMES:
A CURRICULUM ACTIVITY GUIDE**

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Playing in Pencil Sharpeners and Other Things. One of the most delightful scenes in *The Miniature World of Marvin & James* is when Marvin and his cousin Elaine discover the inside of a pencil sharpener. The two of them jump, bounce, and sail about the insides of the sharpener, reveling in the softness of the shavings. What other objects in the classroom or in students' homes could become an amusement park experience for Marvin? As a class, brainstorm different possibilities. Have each student select a different object, and write a "missing chapter" from the book detailing the fun and the danger that Marvin and Elaine might experience. Be sure to include a sketch as part of this process, modeled on Kelly Murphy's sketches.

Missing Someone. Why does Marvin say at the conclusion of the story that it is "good to be missed?" Have students write about a time when they felt lost or lonely without a special friend or family member. Where were they? Do they remember how long they were separate from their loved one? What special things did they do together upon their return? Students can illustrate their memories of either the time away or the reunion with their friend, using pieces of paper that are the appropriate size for the landscape, just as Marvin selected a long flat piece of paper to paint his picture of the beach for James.

Human Stand Ins. *The Miniature World of Marvin and James* is considered animal fantasy because we know that beetles don't speak English, and don't live like humans do, with tables, button chairs, and art studios under the kitchen sink. But other than that, the world exists in the book for James as it does for the rest of us. What magical animals can your students create that might live side-by-side in our world? Have students build a miniature world of their own that can exist in their home. What small animal might it be? Have students draw pictures of the animal and his/her family and friends, and create a map of where the animals live inside his/her apartment, room, or house. Students could also build a miniature room for their animal, using recycled objects found at school and brought in from home.

"Little" Intertextual Connections. While students are reading *The Miniature World of Marvin and James* independently, read aloud from *A Tale of Two Bad Mice*, *The Borrowers*, *The Littles*, or *The Tale of Despereaux*, to allow students to see how other novelists have also had people and creatures living side-by-side in homes.