

MARY MARGARET MEETS HER MATCH

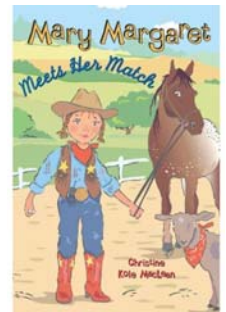
by Christine Kole MacLean

While on family vacation at the Lazy K dude ranch, Mary Margaret figures she will become an expert equestrian within a matter of days. Too bad her horse doesn't see things the same way. Terco just won't cooperate, and until she does, Kansas, the riding instructor, won't let them leave the kiddie corral. How is Mary Margaret supposed to impress Kansas, who, despite her stubbornness, is the best girl Mary Margaret has ever met? When Mary Margaret feels too fenced in, she decides to take the reins. Will she end up befriendng Kansas, or just seeing stars (the painful kind)?

Here's what reviewers have said about MARY MARGARET, CENTER STAGE:

"Mary Margaret, MacLean's irrepressible heroine, has a big personality and a mouth to match...when Ellie wins the role of Cinderella, Mary Margaret needs a plan that will put her back in the spotlight. Girls should appreciate Mary Margaret's dilemmas and find the story both amusing and suspenseful."

—Kirkus



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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Characters

Mary Margaret says Kansas is the first person she admires as much as herself. What do you think Mary Margaret likes about her?



How are Mary Margaret's and Kansas' lives different? How are they the same?

Mary Margaret feels much more warmly toward her brother JT, than to her baby sister Liza. What does Mary Margaret like about JT? What doesn't she like about Liza? How do you think Mary Margaret and Liza will get along when they both get older?

Plot

Why does Mary Margaret ask her mom if she can have a puppy when she is having the best day ever, even though she knows the answer will always be no because of her dad's allergies?

What are some of the things on Mary Margaret's dude ranch vacation to-do list? Does she accomplish them all?

What are some of the things Mary Margaret does to convince Kansas that she really can do a good job with the horses? Does she succeed?

Which horse is Mary Margaret most attracted to? Why? Which horse is the best one for her to ride? Why?

How do Mary Margaret and JT save the day when the magician for the party cancels?

Synthesis

What are some of the things Mary Margaret admires about herself?

If Mary Margaret made a list of things about herself that she could change, what might be on it?

Which animal in this book is Mary Margaret most like: Terco, Twister, or Goose? Give some examples.

Name two events that give Mary Margaret confidence to take Twister out for a ride even though the ranch hands have warned her about the horse.

Why do Mary Margaret's parents let her participate in the rider show-off even though she's in big trouble?

Some of the ranch staff in this book have colorful names. What cowpoke names do you think Mary Margaret would give these people:

- JT
- Her mom
- Her dad
- Liza
- Herself

If you've read the other Mary Margaret books, you can make up names for Mr. Mooney and Ellie, too.



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activity guide by www.hopevestergaard.com

ACTIVITY IDEAS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Language Arts

Poetry

Mary Margaret writes several poems during the course of the book. Write 3-4 of your own poems about one of these themes from the story: *making a new friend*, *trying something that's hard for you*, or *dealing with disappointment*.

Literature Study

At the library, find some other books about children and horses. Read the plot summaries. How are they similar to the plot of Mary Margaret. How are they different? Read one other horse story to see if you're correct.

Word Study

This book includes colorful cowboy words such as: *mucking the stalls*, *yahoo*, *skally-hootin'*, *chuck-wagon*, *mosey*, and *molly-coddle*.



Spend some time with these words. How do you pronounce them? What do they mean? How many syllables does each word have? Can you think of *synonyms*, other words that mean the same thing? Do these words follow the spelling patterns of words you already know?

Make a list of chores that you do at home or school. Make up your own cowboy names for them.

Composition

Mary Margaret has to write a report about her spring break. Write a report about a vacation you took. Where did you go? What did you do? What did you learn? Would you do it again? Be sure each paragraph has a main idea and supporting details. Trade papers with a friend to check punctuation and spelling.

Dramatic Play

Play a game called "Who am I?" Act like you are a character from the book. Have an audience guess which person you're playing.

Mary Margaret's mother has to plan a party in this book. Plan a party: a class party or a home party. Brainstorm: how to invite people, what your theme is, what food you'll serve, and what the entertainment will be.

Mathematics

Story Problems

Pretend you are planning a barbecue for some friends. You invite 25 people and serve hotdogs, fruit punch, and chocolate chip cookies. Use another piece of paper to answer these questions. Remember to show your work!

- Hotdogs come in packs of ten. How many packs do you need if everyone eats two hotdogs?
- Hot dog buns come in packs of twelve. How many packs do you need if everyone eats two hotdogs? How many buns will you have leftover?
- If there are 75 cookies in a pack, how many cookies can each person have if you buy one pack?
- Fruit punch costs \$4.00 per gallon. There are sixteen cups in one gallon. How much does each cup of fruit punch cost? How many gallons will you need for 25 people to have at least one cup each?

Problem Solving

Mary Margaret really wants to get permission to go on a trail ride, so she tries to do things that will show Kansas she can be responsible. What is something that you really want? Make a list of things you can do to prove to someone in charge that you are responsible enough to earn that privilege.

In the book, Mary Margaret's mom was very happy that the day of the party turned out to be sunny. What could they have done if that day were rainy?

Self-Help Skills

Make a list of things you would need to pack if you were going to a dude ranch. People take all kinds of interesting vacations. What would you need to pack if you were going on a ski vacation? What if you were going to help people rebuild houses after a hurricane? What if you were camping out in your backyard?

Think about the choices Mary Margaret made in this story. Which decisions were good ones? Which ones weren't so good? What are some better choices she could have made?

