

## ***Little Red Pen***

**AUTHOR:** Stevens, Janet and Susan Crummel Stevens

**ILLUSTRATOR:** Stevens, Janet

**PUBLISHER:** Harcourt

**COPYRIGHT DATE:** 2011

**ART MEDIUM:** watercolor/ink, pencil

**GENRE:** humorous Stories, Folk Literature

**LIFE SKILLS:** effort, resourcefulness, cooperation

**SYNOPSIS:** In a “fractured” fairy tale version of “The Little Red Hen” starring school supplies as the ones who must “save the world” from the mountain of papers needing graded. They all respond with the familiar ‘Not I’ until their friend, Red Pen, collapses from exhaustion while going at it alone. They then band together with the help of the classroom hamster and save the day!

**BOOKTALK:** Who will help the Little Red Pen save the world? Fantastic things are possible when you enlist the help of an eraser, a highlighter, a stapler, a pair of scissors, a pencil, and a pushpin.

### **AUTHOR:**

Susan Stevens Crummel (co-written with Janet Stevens)

Crummel is somewhat “new” to writing children’s books as she was a math teacher for 31 years. She started collaborating with her sister, illustrator Janet Stevens, in 1997. She lives in Texas with her husband and enjoys time with her three children and three grandchildren.

### **Other books written by the author:**

*All in One Hour*

*City Dog, Country Dog*

*Ten-Gallon Bart books*

### **Books collaborated on together...**

*And the Dish Ran Away with the Spoon*

*Cock-a-Doodle-Do!*

*The Great Fuzz Frenzy*

*Help Me, Mr. Mutt*

*Jackalope*

*Plaidypus Lost*

### **ILLUSTRATOR:**

Janet Stevens has been drawing since she was a young child, even on her homework assignments. After doing work painting designs on fabrics, she attended an illustrators' workshop where she was encouraged to delve into children's books. She is well-known for her quirky animal characters and has won many awards for her work, including a Caldecott Honor Award.

**Other books illustrated by the illustrator:**

*Anansi books by Eric Kimmel*

*Epossumondas books*

*To Market, To Market*

*Tops and Bottoms*

**CHALLENGING WORDS (...due to pronunciation, spelling and/or defining):**

Many Spanish words; wibbled, wobbled, squinted, exhausted, numbskull catastrophe, scowled, declared, budging, organized, alphabetized

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (Please include 4-6 questions)**

1. Why was the pen worried? What did she think was going to happen if the papers went ungraded?
2. Who did she ask to help her? What did they say?
3. What happened to the pen when she tried to do it alone?
4. What did the other office supplies do when they realized she was gone?
5. How did they plan to rescue her?
6. How did Tank the hamster help? Did he want to help?
7. The text is in different colors and fonts to show who is speaking. Do you think this is helpful or more confusing?
8. Do you think the author captured the personality of each character accurately? How or how not?
9. Why does the Little Red Pen think it is the end of the world if the papers aren't graded?
10. How did each character contribute to "saving the world"?

**ACTIVITIES with CORE STANDARDS:**

*Language Arts:*

Compare and contrast this book with *The Little Red Hen*. Note the differences.

RL.K.9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

RL.3.2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Describe how the office supplies are given "personalities" also known as personification.

RL.1.4. Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Rewrite the dialogue into a “reader’s theater” script and act it out.

RL.2.6. Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

RL.3.5. Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

**RELATED INTERNET SITES:**

Susan Stevens Crummel’s website

<http://www.susanstevenscrummel.com>

Janet Stevens website

[www.janetstevens.com](http://www.janetstevens.com)

[http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/kids/resources/LittleRedPen\\_activitykit.pdf](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/kids/resources/LittleRedPen_activitykit.pdf) -- activity kit specifically for this book