



Image copyright Gerard DuBois

**Discussion and Activity Guide for *Monsieur Marceau: Actor Without Words* by Leda Schubert, with illustrations by Gérard Dubois  
Porter/Roaring Brook, 2012**

Prepared by Laura Williams McCaffrey

***Discussion Questions:***

1. What were the most important events in the story of Marcel Marceau's life? Why were they important to him?
2. How would you describe Marcel Marceau's character? Why would you describe him this way?
3. What is a mime? Using quotations from the story, explain why Marcel Marceau might have become a mime.

4. How do the illustrations in the first half of this biography help depict the historical era Marcel Marceau lived in? How do they give information about that era's places and events?
5. Look at the illustrations in the second half of the story, the illustrations of Marcel Marceau performing. What do the illustrations tell you about Marcel Marceau as a person? What do they tell you about his performances? Explain your answers.
6. Marceau said, "The mime must make reality into dreams and dreams into reality." What do you think he meant by this? What other professions require people to do the same? Why?
7. Marceau also said, "Neither laughter nor tears are French, English, Russian, or Japanese." What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
8. If Marcel Marceau had a motto for the best way to live life, what do you think it might have been? Why?
9. What other stories, fiction or nonfiction, does *Monsieur Marceau* remind you of? What are the similarities between those stories and this one? What are the differences?
10. What people in your own life is Marcel Marceau most like? Why?

### ***Activities:***

1. ***Silent Storytelling*** - Pick a number of common folk tales or fables and read these to your class. Lead a discussion identifying the stories' main characters and events. Then place your students in small groups, and give each group one folk tale or fable title. Tell students they'll mime the stories for each other, and help them practice their stories. You may want to use Rob Mermin's advice, on the last page of the "Afterword," to help them begin miming. Once their stories are ready, set up a performance day and enjoy their silent storytelling.
2. ***Life-Changing Events Anthology***- *Monsieur Marceau* describes a few events that transformed Marcel Marceau's life, events that forever influenced him. Using this biography as an example, help students identify their own life-changing events. Once they have, help each of them write a personal essay that describes these events and articulates how the events were important. After students complete their essays, compile them in an anthology for the classroom.
3. ***Passion Essay*** – *Monsieur Marceau* is about a person's passion and creative expression. Help students identify and articulate their own passions. Assist them as they brainstorm one to three ways they might develop or use their passions.

Then have them write their passion essays. When they've written, revised and polished these essays, post them on a class blog or display them in the classroom for all to read.

4. ***Extension Activity for Older Readers: French Resistance Report*** – If your class is ready to study the Holocaust and World War II, help students research World War II and the French Resistance. As an alternative, have students study the way Denmark saved its Jewish population from the Nazis with a text like Ellen Levine's *Darkness Over Denmark: The Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews*. Assist students to take and organize their notes. Guide them as they write their reports to completion.

### ***Common Core Standards***

This discussion and activity guide was designed to help students meet reading standards for grade 3 (see below). Most questions and activities can be adapted to meet the standards for grade 2 or grade 4. Students might also meet a variety of writing standards with the activities, depending on the ways in which teachers assign activities and provide guidance.

#### ***Key Ideas and Details***

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

#### ***Craft and Structure***

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

#### ***Integration of Knowledge and Ideas***

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)



Image copyright Gerard DuBois

For further information:

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

<http://www.gdubois.com/2008/index.html>

<http://us.macmillan.com/splash/publishers/roaring-brook-press.html>