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# Marathon Mouse

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a teacher's guide

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Created by marcie colleen

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## **Amy Dixon**

### **Author, *Marathon Mouse***

Amy Dixon grew up as one of seven siblings, so the only peace and quiet she ever got was inside a book. Once she had her own kids, she rediscovered her love for picture books at the public library. It was the one place she knew all four of her kids would be happy . . . and quiet. She writes from her home, where she lives with her four little inspirations and her marathon-running husband, Rob.

## **Sam Denlinger**

### **Illustrator, *Marathon Mouse***

Sam Denlinger is a writer, illustrator, and cartoonist from Gaithersburg, Maryland. He moved to New York City in 2006 to attend The New School, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in writing and literature.

## **Marcie Colleen**

### **Curriculum Writer, *Marathon Mouse***

Marcie is a former teacher with a Bachelor's degree in English Education from Oswego State and a Masters degree in Educational Theater from NYU. She also writes Picture Books and like Preston Mouse will be running the NYC Marathon on November 4, 2012. She lives in Brooklyn, NYC.

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## **How To Use This Guide**

This classroom guide for *Marathon Mouse* is designed for students in preschool through first grade.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Marathon Mouse* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant California content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

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## Reading Comprehension

Before you read or listen to *Marathon Mouse*, look at the cover.

- What do you think the book will be about? Why do you think so?
- Can you find clues in the illustration?

Now read or listen to the book.

- Who is the main character(s)? Why do you think so?
- Who are some of the other characters?
- What is Preston's dream?
- What does Preston's family think of his dream?
- What does Preston do to prepare for the marathon?
- How does Preston feel at the Starting Line? Mile 1? Mile 9? Mile 15? As he approached Central Park?
- Who does Preston see that lifts his spirits?
- What happens at the Finish Line? Does anyone learn a lesson?

Let's talk about the people who made *Marathon Mouse*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Take a closer look at the illustrations during Preston's training.

- What is happening in each illustration?
- What are some details that the illustrator added to tell the story?

As a class, read *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Crockett Johnson

- Why do you think everyone tells him the seed won't grow?
- Does he believe them? How do you know?
- What things does the boy do to take care of the seed?
- What do you think the boy and his family learned when the seed finally grew?
- How is this story similar to Preston's story in *Marathon Mouse*

## Action! Learning about Verbs

*Marathon Mouse* is a story about a little mouse named Preston who longs to DO something great! Here are some activities to help introduce verbs to your class.

### **Simon Says Verbs**

The Simon Says Verbs game is a fun verb activity that will help students both identify verbs from other parts of speech and distinguish action verbs from state of being verbs. The students will also get some healthy exercise while playing this game.

Have the children all stand up in an area large enough for each child to move around safely such as in the school gym or outside on the playground. The teacher will stand in front of the class and say, "Simon says..." followed by a verb. The students should then do or be what Simon said. For example, if the teacher says, "Simon says dance," then all the children should dance. If the teacher says, "Simon says be excited," then the students should be excited. The teacher can also include some words that are not verbs. For example, if the teacher says, "Simon says table," the students should stop moving because table is a noun, not a verb.

Optional: Instead of the teacher making all the commands, individual students can take turns playing Simon. Each child should get a chance to stand at the front of the class and say, "Simon says."

### **Action Bingo**

In this version of Bingo, the students compete to be the first to perform all the actions on the list. Items can be arranged in a normal bingo grid or simply as a list for simplicity.

Some possible items for the list are:

- Tell a Joke
- Pretend you are taking a bath or shower in the middle of the room!
- Select someone else to sing a song with you.
- Recite a nursery rhyme.
- Imitate a comic strip character until someone guesses its identity.
- Behave like a duck for 10 seconds
- Say something nice about three different people in the room.
- Shake hands with three other people in the room.
- Pantomime a two year old child taking a bone away from a German shepherd dog.
- Walk from one end of the room to the other with an object between you knees.

- Act like an egg being cracked and fried.
- Do an impression of a well known celebrity. Identify the person first.
- Confer with another person and make a short poem about one of the leaders
- Select a few people to aid you in selecting a scene from a fairy tale story and act it out.
- Draw a picture of yourself and give it to someone in the room.
- Find something in your pocket or purse to give to the person on your left.
- Retell the story of Goldilocks and the three bears using the name of four other people in the room as the bears and Goldilocks.

ADD Your Own Crazy Actions!

How to Play:

1. Each student or team of students must perform all the actions from a list of actions in front of someone and then those who participated or observed that action must sign beside the item.
2. Whoever gets all the items signed first, wins!

### **Write a Superhero Story!**

Preston Mouse loves to read his Charlie Cheddarworth comics and think about how an ordinary mouse could do something extraordinary.

All Superheros have Superpowers that help them defeat the bad guys. Charlie has super-rodent speed.

Create your own Superhero story. Give your Superhero some verbs that make him or her extraordinary. Can they fly? Leap high? See through walls? Start with 3 verbs and then write a story about your Superhero.

*Optional Story Starter:* "Here I come to save the day! I am so strong I can do anything on Earth! I can..."

OR

Create the Superhero story as a class and then have each individual student draw a picture of the Superhero in action!

# Math

**Word Problems** *For younger students, the use of pictures or props might be needed to figure out word problems.*

- 1) In the morning Preston does 5 sit-ups. In the afternoon he does 3 more. How many sit-ups did Preston do today?
- 2) Preston is feeling tired at mile 18. If he is going to complete the marathon of 26.2 miles, how many more miles does he have to run?
- 3) A marathoner has 7 Professor Parson's Protein Power Puffs. He drops 2 on the ground. How many Protein Power Puffs does the marathoner now have?
- 4) Preston dodges 1 shirt, 3 hats, and 4 gloves as the race starts. How many pieces of clothing are in the cotton avalanche?
- 5) Preston needs to run 8 miles. One run around his block is 2 miles. How many more miles does he have to run?

## **How Far is 26.2 miles?**

A Marathon is 26.2 miles.

The .2 is a concept that can be very hard for kids to get. Therefore it is best to create something concrete that will help them better visualize and understand.

Create little packages of candy or pennies or buttons. Each package should include 10 pieces in it to make a whole. Therefore, if one bag equals one mile, how many bags would constitute a marathon? Obviously the .2 would not be a complete bag.

In New York City 20 city blocks = a mile. Measure out a mile near your school or a well-known neighborhood nearby. You can even use a track (4 rotations of a running track = one mile). The children will then figure out how many would equal a marathon.



## Science

**“Mice would make excellent marathoners. We have twice as many legs!”**

**--Preston Mouse**

On the internet or in the school library, have students research how fast animals are and how many legs they have.

Good animals to look up would be mice, kangaroos, centipedes, spiders, etc.

How fast are each of these animals?

Create a table to organize the data by legs and distance. See example below.

*\*This exercise certainly requires a lot of math that students might not know how to do on their own. However, based on the abilities of the class teachers can either do the math with the students or simplify the calculations and comparisons.*

<b>Animal</b>	<b>How many legs?</b>	<b>How fast?</b>	<b>Calculate mph</b>	<b>Marathon time?</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mice	4				
Spiders	8				
Kangaroos	2				
Centipedes	100				
Ants	6				

Once all of the data is completed and in the table, analyze:

- Does the more legs mean the animal is faster?
- In a marathon, which animal would win?
- For an added bonus, research the fastest human and see how they measure up.

# Health

## **Stretching Exercises**

*Preston Mouse knows that stretching is important both for injury prevention and injury treatment. Preston makes sure to stretch every day. Below are some stretches that are safe for young children.*

Touch your toes. This is a basic preschool exercise that can increase flexibility. Use this exercise as a warm-up before tackling other activities. Bend at the waist and reach for your toes. Count to 10, then come back up.

Do a number of jumping jacks. Try this one out by explaining to open up your arms and legs like an X, then put your legs together and arms at your sides. *Jumping jacks are a challenging coordination movement for preschoolers, but there are still benefits in jumping and following directions.*

Sit and stretch. Put legs together and then creep your fingers down to your toes.

Give each knee a kiss.

Open up the legs wide and stretch one leg at a time.

Practice "butterfly knees". While sitting, touch the bottoms of your feet together, with knees opened to the sides. Flap your legs like the motion of a butterfly.

Roll your head gently by moving to the side, looking down and moving to the other side. This can be done while either standing or sitting, but must be done slowly and

Balancing activities such as standing on one leg and counting how long you can stay balanced. Your preschooler will likely be challenged by this at first, but eventually will become more stable.

*Read more: [How to Exercise with Your Preschooler | eHow.com](http://www.ehow.com/how_2112218_exercise-preschooler.html#ixzz28GB0JQQS)*

*[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2112218\\_exercise-preschooler.html#ixzz28GB0JQQS](http://www.ehow.com/how_2112218_exercise-preschooler.html#ixzz28GB0JQQS)*

## **Games = Exercise**

*It is important for people to get out and get moving. Not everyone desires to run a marathon like Preston, some prefer playing sports. Talk to your students about various forms of exercise. There are lots of ways to get your heart pumping daily.*

*As a class, play the games below.*

*Which ones get your heart rate up? Which game do you prefer? Do they feel like exercise? Are they fun? Would you play them every day? What part(s) of the body do you think each game benefits?*

### Hot Lava

Kids love this game of imaginary adventure where players pretend they are escaping an active volcano. Randomly place sheets of paper on the floor (you can substitute pillow cases, towels, or any mats). Work your way across the room jumping and leaping from paper to paper, making sure not to touch the "hot lava" (the floor). You will increase your heart rate as you challenge the kids to see who can cross the room first. This game helps kids develop spatial awareness as they learn to control their body tempo and movement.

### Skip, Hop

Helping young children learn how to skip and hop improves their coordination while providing a cardiovascular workout. Jumping and hopping, movements that create an impact on the skeleton, increase bone density. To make it fun, designate a finish line and have the kids hop forward and then backward as they make their way across the room.

### Hang Ten

Head outdoors to work on upper-body strength. Give your arms and shoulders a workout by clutching onto monkey bars. See who can cling the longest, or count how long you can hang on and try to beat your score next time. If you can do chin-ups, show off your strength and technique.

### Run Wheelbarrow Races

A wheelbarrow race, in which one player "walks" on his hands, while a partner holds his legs. This classic game offers an upper-body workout for the person "walking" on the ground and challenges the total body strength of the player holding the feet.

### Crawl Like a Crab

Pretend to be a crab: Walk sideways on your hands and feet with your torso and head facing up. As you crab-crawl around the room, you'll tone your arms and backs. Once you get the hang of it, have a race! To increase the challenge, find out who can crab-crawl the longest, using only one foot, an exercise game that

strengthens the backs of the hips and legs.

### Walk Like a Spider

Position yourself on all fours, with your head facing the floor. Walk on your hands and on the balls of your feet, keeping your backside up. This exercise builds strength in the body's core area. Pretend you are spiders or prehistoric animals, or just have a funny race around the classroom.

### Stride Like a Giant

Also known as walking lunges, this activity really works the hamstrings and gluts. Position your hands on your hips and bend your knees as you take a giant step forward. For each step, bring the next foot forward with the knees bent. Play tag, but instead of running, players lunge as they try not to get caught.

The importance of the playground: Get outside and play as much as you can. Our nervous system is so well stimulated with the sun and air. Go out even if it's cold. What kid won't love building a snowman?

## **Healthy Eating**

*Preston knows the importance of choosing healthy foods. "He even gave up his beloved marshmallows."*

*Below are some activities and discussion starters to help children learn the importance of healthy eating habits.*

- Discuss the children's favorite foods eaten for lunch and say why they chose those foods.
- Decorate a class bulletin board of "Foods We Eat for Lunch"
- As a class, brainstorm food groups, ie cereals; fruit/vegetables; meats/nuts (proteins) and dairy. Sort their favorite foods into food groups.
- Discuss what kinds of foods are good for us to eat.
- Discuss what kinds of foods should we eat only a little of.
- Talk about different foods that keep us healthy with vitamins and nutrients. "An apple a day".
- Talk about food as fuel.
- Discuss what foods are considered "sometimes foods" or "special treats". Why are these foods are eaten only sometimes? What sorts of ingredients do you find a lot of in most junk foods?
- Research online and in cookbooks some healthy snacks. Have each kid sign up to bring a healthy snack in to share.

## Social Studies

**“Most nights before bed, he would read his Charlie Cheddarworth comics and think about how an ordinary mouse could do something extraordinary.”**

### **Everyone Can Be A Hero**

What is a Hero? First, ask your students what they think a hero is.

- A hero is anyone who can and does make a difference in their communities.
- A hero chooses to help the community.
- A hero is open to the differences between community members and is willing to listen to other ideas.
- A hero is a positive role model for others in the community.
- A hero does the right thing.

### Examples of Heroes

Batman and Superman/other “heroes” – Batman has no superpowers, but chooses to help the community

### Examples of historical heroes

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (he promoted noble ideas and actions, stood up to opponents, worked to do the right thing)
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (stood up to men for women’s rights, though few other women were doing so and there were many restrictions on women)
- Abraham Lincoln (The President of the United States during the Civil War, created the Emancipation Proclamation ending slavery)

### Activity

Have students fold a piece of letter-size paper into four squares. For the first square, have them draw, write or represent their favorite superhero. For the second, have them represent their favorite historical hero, like Mother Teresa. For the third, have them represent their favorite community hero, like a teacher or firefighter. For the last, have them draw or write about themselves. For all the squares, make sure the students include reasons why the people/others they have chosen are their favorites, and why they are a hero.

## **Books about Extraordinary People**

A Picture Book of George Washington, by David A. Adler, John Wallner, and Alexandra Wallner.

A Picture Book of Abraham Lincoln, by David A. Adler, John Wallner, and Alexandra Wallner.

A Picture Book of Martin Luther King Jr., by David A. Adler and Robert Casilla

Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., by Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier

My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up With the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., by Christine King Farris

A Picture Book of Helen Keller, by David A. Adler, John Wallner, and Alexandra Wallner

A Picture Book of Thomas Alva Edison, by David A. Adler, John Wallner, and Alexandra Wallner

If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks, by Faith Ringgold

The Big Book of American Heroes, by Mike Janulewicz ISBN: 0762403934

Have Fun With American Heroes: Activities, Projects, and Fascinating Facts, by David C. King

50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet, by Dennis Denenberg and Lorraine Roscoe

Superdog: The Heart of a Hero, by Carolyn and Mark Buehner

Mommy, You're My Hero, by Michelle Ferguson Cohen ISBN: 0972926429

Maxi, The Hero, by Debra Barracca ISBN: 0140554971

Frog is a Hero, by Max Velthuijs ISBN: 1840592028

Hero Cat, by Eileen Spinelli ISBN: 0761452230

The Adventures of Taxi Dog, by Debra and Sal Barracca

Visit [www.myhero.com](http://www.myhero.com) and search for marathon to read stories of extraordinary marathon runners.

## **Preston the Extraordinary (a story of Perseverance)**

After brainstorming ideas of what a hero is, read *Marathon Mouse*, again.

Throughout the story, ask the children if Preston has any of the traits of a hero.

Explain that a hero is someone who makes a good role model or someone to "look up to". Why would Preston be a good role model?

Introduce the idea of "Perseverance" or "never giving up".

- Sing "The Itsy Bitsy Spider". How does the spider show perseverance? What obstacles does the spider have? Why does the spider continue to try?
- Read "The Carrot Seed" by Ruth Krauss. How does the boy in the story show perseverance? What obstacles does the boy have? Why does the boy continue to try?
- What about Preston? What obstacles stand in Preston's way? Who tells him he can't do it? Why does he continue to try?

### **Mural Activity**

Tell the class that they will be working together to make a mural of Preston's story. First brainstorm a list of the things they want to include in the mural, including the characters, the race event, etc. Use many art supplies to make the different objects and characters with markers, glue, scissors and colored paper.

When everyone is finished, arrange the pictures on a large piece of bulletin board paper. Then use quotes from the story to make labels for the different pictures on sentence strips. For the title of the mural use the dialog, "Mice were not made to run."

Don't be afraid to reach for your dreams! Have children write down or draw at least one of their dreams or something that they want to accomplish.

Display these dreams near the mural with the title "I Can Be Extraordinary."

### **Everyone Wins ~ Setting Goals**

In a very competitive world, it is important to teach a lesson on personal victories.

Although only one person WINS the marathon, everyone receives a medal.

Explain to the children about setting goals and reaching them and how that is winning. Winning isn't always about beating someone, it can be about reaching a goal or succeeding for yourself. Have each child set a goal for the week or another

set period of time. It can be reading a certain number of books or getting a certain grade on a quiz. Or something physical like doing a certain amount of sit ups. Once they complete this goal, have a "medal" or award for them.

## History of the Marathon

The modern Athens Marathon commemorates the run of the soldier Pheidippides from a battlefield at the site of the town of Marathon, Greece, to Athens in 490 B.C. Legend has it that Pheidippides delivered the momentous message "Niki!" ("victory"), then collapsed and died. .

The legend of Pheidippides was honored by a 24.85 mile (40,000 meters) run from Marathon Bridge to Olympic stadium in Athens.

Spiridon Louis, a Greek postal worker, won the first modern Marathon with a time of 2 hours, 58 minutes, 50 seconds, an average pace of 7:11 minutes per mile.

At the 1908 Olympic Games in London, the marathon distance was changed to 26.2 miles to cover the ground from Windsor Castle to White City Stadium, with the 2.2 miles added on so the race could finish in front of royal family's viewing box. This added two miles to the course, and is the origin of the Marathon tradition of shouting "God save the Queen!" (or other words relating to the Queen) as mile post 24 is passed.

The first NYC Marathon was held in 1970 with 127 competitors and 55 finishers. In 2012 it has grown to 48,000 competitors to be one of the largest marathons in the world.

The NYC Marathon travels through the 5 boroughs of NYC: Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Manhattan. The course includes 5 bridges.

Competitors come from all 50 states and over 100 different countries.