

Mirette on the High Wire

written and illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully

- * Won the Caldecott Medal in 1993. This award honors illustration.
- * The story is set in 19th century Paris
- * The story is fiction, but the author was inspired by a real tightrope walker named Blondin. Blondin crossed Niagara Falls many times.
- * The author illustrated the story in the impressionist style of 19th century artists like Renoir and Monet.

Introduce yourself. What is your first reaction to the book?

Do you like the style of art used to illustrate the story? Does the art help to tell the story? Do you have a favorite illustration?

What ideas/themes does the author explore in the story? For example, one theme is friendship - the friendship between Mirette and Bellini. What are some other themes in the story?

Why do you think Bellini is afraid? How can we be afraid to do something we have done many times?

How would you define bravery?

Is there a difference between facing your fears and overcoming your fears?

What if Bellini hadn't walked the wire in front of the crowd of people? What if he walked a wire just as high, just as far, in some private place with no one watching? Would he still have been brave? What would be the difference?

"By dawn he knew that if he didn't face his fear at least, he could not face Mirette." Has there been a time when you felt like Bellini: that you needed to face your fear in order to face somebody? Did you do it?

Does it take more courage to face your fear or face somebody else?

Did Bellini face his fear for himself or for Mirette? Does it matter?

Tell about a time when you had to face or overcome a fear.

"Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work." (Stephen King, American author) Do you agree or disagree?

What lessons might a child learn from this story?

