

Balloons over Broadway

Recommended for Grades K-3

Book Summary: Balloons over Broadway

Balloons over Broadway tells the true story of how Tony Sarg made the first parade balloons. As a child, Tony loved making things move and discovering new ways of doing things. He began making marionettes until Macy's asked him to design a puppet display for their windows. When this was a success he was asked to help design a parade for the store's employees who missed their own holiday traditions. The parade was such a success that the store decided to have one every year on Thanksgiving.

[SPOILER]

As the parade continues, it becomes larger and many people are unable to see his puppets. Tony creates new helium puppets that rise into the sky so everyone is able to enjoy the parade. This type of helium puppet that Tony designed continues to be used today for the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade.

Author Biography: Melissa Sweet

Melissa Sweet was born January 1, 1956 in Wyckoff, NJ. She was first recognized for her artistic in talent by her third grade teacher and then began looking more towards art as a career when she took a pottery class in high school. She has an Associate's Degree from Endicott College in Massachusetts and also studied art at the Kansas City Art Institute. She has illustrated over sixty books and has recently began writing and illustrating her own. Her artwork has won her several awards and honors including The Robert F. Sibert Medal and a Caldecott Honor. She lives in Rockport, Maine with her family.



Oswego Campus
32 W Jefferson Street
Oswego, IL 60543
www.oswego.lib.il.us

Montgomery Campus
1111 Reading Drive
Montgomery, IL 60538
(630) 978-1272

Balloons over Broadway

Recommended for Grades K-3

Discussion Questions: Balloons over Broadway

1. For his first invention, Tony creates a pulley system to open the chicken coop door so he doesn't have to leave his bed to feed the chickens. Think about the four steps Tony had in his plan. What is a similar invention that you could make with four steps?
2. When Tony was older, he began making marionettes that moved on strings or gears and pulleys. Why were these moving marionettes so unusual?
3. Imagine you were first seeing the mechanical marionettes in Macy's "Wondertown" windows. What would be your reaction? Are these marionettes still impressive today? Why or why not?
4. Tony designs the floats for the Macy's day parade. Why was this parade so important for the store's employees? Does the parade still have the same significance today? Why or why not?
5. Why did Tony have to revise his Macy's parade puppets? What do you think the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade would be like today if Tony had given up?
6. Compare Tony's marionettes with the parade balloons today. How are they different? Are there any characteristics that they share?
7. What were some of Tony's concerns with the new helium balloons? Are any of these still a problem for the parade balloons used today? What kinds of new problems might today's parade balloons have?
8. In the Author's Note, Tony Sarg is quoted as saying, "I have never done a stroke of work in my life." Why did he not think that making his marionettes and puppets was work? Why do you think it is important to have a job that you enjoy?
9. Two of Tony's successors were Bil Baird whose puppets were seen in *The Sound of Music* and Jim Henson who created The Muppets. What do you think is Tony Sarg's legacy? How are puppets still used today?
10. The author uses a combination of traditional painted pictures and mixed media like buttons and puppets to illustrate the story. Does this illustration style enhance the story or bring it to life? Why or why not? What other ways could the author have chosen to illustrate the story?



Oswego Campus
32 W Jefferson Street
Oswego, IL 60543
www.oswego.lib.il.us

Montgomery Campus
1111 Reading Drive
Montgomery, IL 60538
(630) 978-1272