

Title: Bunnacula

Authors: James and Deborah Howe

Genre: Fiction

Level: 4.5

Theme:

Setting: In a family home.

Characters: Bunnacula, Harold, Chester, The Monroe Family

Summary/Plot: The Monroe family finds a bunny at the movie theater. They are watching an old Dracula movie, so they call the bunny Bunnacula. The Monroes already have two pets, Harold the dog and Chester the cat. While Harold isn't bothered by the new addition, Chester begins to suspect that the bunny is a vampire. Bunnacula's markings make him look like he is wearing a cape, and he seems to have fangs. Strange things seem to happen around the house after Bunnacula arrives. So Chester, with a little help from Harold, tries to rescue the family from the vampire bunny.

Chapter 1

Vocabulary- admonition, reverie, tranquil, decipher, mongrel

Questions:

1. What message was tied around Bunnacula's neck?
2. Who was able to read the message? Why could they?
3. From what two words does Bunnacula come?
4. How do you think Chester felt about Bunnacula when he first met him?
5. How do you think he felt about Bunnacula at the end of the chapter? How do you know? Which words helped show his feelings at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 2

Vocabulary- supernatural, eerie, compelled, sustenance, aura

Questions:

1. Why did Harold say the Chester is not "your ordinary cat"?
2. What strange things did Chester notice about Bunnacula the first night that the rabbit was in the house? (list three things)
3. What did Harold think about Chester's story? Why do you think he felt that way?

Chapter 3

Vocabulary- energetic, indulgent, wafted, idiotic, significant

Questions:

1. What "unusual goings-on" happened in Chapter Three? (list at least two)

2. How have Chester's feelings about Bunnacula changed?
3. How do Harold's feelings about Bunnacula compare to Chester's feelings?

Chapter 4

Vocabulary- scholarly, sauntered, aghast, taut, tentatively

Questions:

1. What actions did Chester take in this chapter to prove he is a very intelligent cat? (list at least two)
2. Why did Chester make it a point to remind Harold that the note around Bunnacula's neck was written in an obscured dialect of the Carpathian mountain region?
3. What characteristics of Bunnacula convinced Chester that the rabbit was really a vampire? (list at least three)

Chapter 5

Vocabulary- blight, organic, grimace, menacingly

Questions:

1. What explanation did the Monroes offer for the strange white vegetables?
2. What was Chester's "act"? Did Chester accomplish anything with his act?
3. At the end of the chapter, Chester said that he planned to take matters into his own hands. What do you think Chester is planning to do?

Chapter 6

Vocabulary- emanated, pathetic, pendant, scruff, verbalized

Questions:

1. Why did Mrs. Monroe give Chester a bath?
2. What words from the story tell you that Chester did not enjoy the bath?
3. Do you think Chester will treat Bunnacula differently now that he has been punished for his actions?

Chapter 7

Vocabulary- exemplary, devious, listless, commotion

Questions:

1. According to Harold, Chester only acted in an exemplary manner when he had something devious in mind. What devious actions was Chester planning at the beginning of the chapter?
2. Why do you think the Monroes did not go to the aid of Bunnacula?
3. What does it mean to be "cruel to be kind"?

Chapter 8

Vocabulary- bewilderment, imminent, isolating, nabbed, petrified, predicament, stealthily

Questions:

1. What did Harold do in this chapter to try to help Bunnacula?
2. What do you think the vet will do for Chester, Harold and Bunnacula?

Extensions/Projects:

- **A PET'S STORY. . . "My Life With Humans"**

The animals in *Bunnacula* have human characteristics. They can think and talk and read! Imagine that your pet could talk. Create a story about *your family* from your pet's point of view. First, think about some of the interesting things your family does that would make your story funny. If you have more than one pet, you could have your pets talk to each other in dialogue. If you don't have a pet, let one of your dolls or stuffed animals tell a story about your family. Remember to have your pet describe *you*! Use a graphic organizer to help you think about each member of the family your pet will describe. Include their age, what they look like, their likes and dislikes, personality traits, good and bad habits and something about how the human relates to the pet telling the story (examples: "She never feeds me," "He calls me a fleabag").

Hint: Use a graphic organizer for this activity. A dog or cat in the center with thinking bubbles for the child to write about each family member will help the students be organized in their writing.

- **IT'S ALL IN A NAME**

Bunnacula's name was created by combining "Bunny" and "Dracula." Combine some other animal names and monsters to create your own weird creature. Illustrate your monster and then build your monster out of craft materials, junk, boxes, bags, etc. Be sure that both parts of the name are represented.

About the Authors:

James and Deborah Howe were husband and wife. They wrote two books together before she died of cancer in 1978. It was Deborah who suggested that they collaborate on a children's book based on a character that James had created several years earlier. James has continued to write and several of his works are listed below.