Late for School by Mike Reiss
ISBN 1561454915, (2009), Grade level: Elementary

Synopsis: Ever been late for school? What’s your excuse? The is a rollicking, surreal adventure of a young boy as he races to get to school on time. SMITTY IS NEVER late for school, not when his shoes get stuck in a sea of thick, black tar. Not when the sky rains snowmen down on the city streets. Not when he uses his coat for a sail to catch a gale and is swallowed up by a whale. Or when he encounters a robot from Mars eating up cars…or a very, very hungry T-Rex! With rhyming language and a vivid imagination, author Mike Reiss demonstrates that, for some children, getting to school on time can be an adventure. Illustrator Michael Austin’s humorous, exaggerated images colorfully bring to life the mischievous fun of the text. The surprise ending will delight young readers as they cheer on Smitty and his heroic efforts to beat the school bell.

Pre-reading Activities:

- Brainstorm all the reasons students might be late for school.
- Have you ever been late for school?
- What does it feel like when you arrive late for school?
- What do teachers/administrators/secretaries/other students say to you, or others when arriving late?
- What are some ways you can make sure you get to school on time?

Post reading Activities:

a) Understanding the story
   1. Could any of Smitty’s excuses actually happen?
   2. Have students, individually or in pairs/small groups write a poem (using the same format as the book) about a reason for being late for school.
   3. Illustrate the individual poems and publish them into your class’s own ‘Late for School’ picture book.
   4. Read picture books to little buddies or another class in the school. Ask for their feedback.
   5. Create a display of the class picture book for parent night or on literacy day.

b) Personal Reflection
   Have students write in their journals responses to this set of questions.

   1. How does it feel when you don’t get enough sleep the night before school? Does that make it hard to get up in the morning?
   2. How do you wake up in the morning? Do you have someone to wake you up? Do you have your own alarm clock?
   3. How do you travel to school? Are you dependent on someone to take you to school?
   4. What morning routines do you have? What is a typical morning like at your home?
   5. Does being rich or poor affect whether a person might be late for school? In what ways?