



COME SEE THE EARTH TURN THE STORY OF LÉON FOUCAULT

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ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

ABOUT THE BOOK

A sickly child, a poor student, and a medical school dropout, Léon Foucault seemed an unlikely candidate for greatness. But his ingenious experiment—simple, beautiful, and stunningly original—changed how we see the world. Scientists knew that the earth turned on its axis. But how could they *prove* it? Countless experiments had been tried . . . and had failed. Then, one historic day in Paris, Léon Foucault gave a magnificent demonstration that offered the proof everyone had been looking for. Discover the improbable story of the man behind the famous Foucault's Pendulum.

THEMES

- Art
- Science
- History
- Biography
- Earth's rotation
- Physicists, France
- Foucault's Pendulum
- Character Education: effort, creativity, determination, persistence, patience.

ACTIVITIES

Art

- *Come See the Earth Turn (CSET)* is a biography with illustrations of Foucault throughout his life. Have students look in a mirror and draw their own portrait.
- Foucault's experiment became known as the *belle experience* or "beautiful experiment." Students can still see this experiment in museums today. Have students draw a picture of this experiment as a great pendulum swings across the floor and gradually knocks over pegs in a large circle, one by one.

Character Education

- Foucault faced many struggles. Have students identify his challenges and specific instances when Foucault could have given up.
- Foucault was a good example of how people can be weak in some areas, but strong in others. How was Foucault weak? How was he strong? Ask the students to list their strengths and weaknesses.

Geography

- Léon Foucault was born in Paris, France. Have students locate this city on the map.
- Foucault's pendulum is demonstrated in museums around the world, such as the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, and the Smithsonian. Have students locate these museums and others on the map.

Health

- Foucault was born a sickly child. Experts believe he may have suffered from rapid onset of multiple sclerosis later in life. Ask students to research this disease. What are its symptoms? How is it treated today?
- Foucault is not the only person who has faced physical illness and challenges. Ask students to research other notable people who suffered from multiple sclerosis and other conditions.

Language Arts

- People were astonished when they saw Foucault's wonderful experiment. Have students write a letter to a friend as if *they* were one of the people in Paris who saw the earth turn.
- To show how the earth turned, Foucault first had to build a pendulum and the device that would suspend it. As the book explains, he often worked while others slept. Have students write how they worked to achieve a goal, their setbacks, and how they finally succeeded.

Mathematics

- Before his success with the pendulum, Foucault studied the speed of light. How fast is the speed of light? Create math problems using the speed of light.

Research

- Foucault was a physicist. Have students research the names of other notable physicists of the 19th century and this century.
- Before Foucault gave his great demonstration, countless others had tried to prove the earth turned. Research how did they try to do it and why they thought it would work.

Social Studies

- After Foucault's success, many scientists were angry and jealous. As time passed, Foucault received honors from many foreign countries for his discovery, yet France's Academy of Science regularly rejected his membership until three years before his death. Have students discuss why his colleagues and Academy felt this way.

Author Information

Lori Mortensen is an award-winning children's book author of more than 70 books, and over 350 stories and articles. When she's not removing her cat from her keyboard, she works on all sorts of new projects filled with extraordinary people and quirky characters that delight her writing soul.

Her most popular titles include *Mousequerade Ball* (Bloomsbury), *Chicken Lily* (Henry Holt), and *Cowpoke Clyde Rides the Range* (Clarion), *Cowpoke Clyde & Dirty Dawg*, (Clarion), *Cindy Moo* (HarperCollins), and *In the Trees, Honey Bees!* (Dawn). To learn more about Lori's books and other activity guides, visit her website at www.lorimortensen.com.