

Minnesota Storytime
Reading Guide

Title: *Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster*

Author and Illustrator: Debra Frasier

**Publisher and
Copyright Date:** Harcourt, 2000

**Connection to
Minnesota:** Minnesota author and illustrator

Summary: This is a story about a young girl named Sage who experiences an embarrassing moment in school after she misunderstands the definition of one of her vocabulary words – miscellaneous. Both the main and side stories in this book create wonderful opportunities for playing word games.

Suggested ages: 7-10

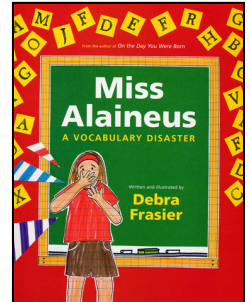
Tips for Reading:

- There is so much going on in this book (main story, extra credit “letter” sentences, vocabulary lists, definitions, information on chalkboard, etc.) that even more time and thought will be needed in preparing how to share this book with the intended audience. Consider reading just the main story initially, and then additional readings to bring out the other aspects in the book.
- Point out that Sage’s sentences for the *Extra Credit!* assignment are found on the edges of each page. Do not read them in conjunction with the story; instead, revisit them as a separate reading activity. See Sage’s **Extra Credit Dictionary Sentences** on the last page for Mrs. Page’s comment about her work.
- Pause slightly and use a change of voice each time a word is defined in the text (e.g., “Forest is not – **slight pause** – a *thicket of trees.*”

Questions before reading:

- What does it mean to give or write the definition for a word?
- How can you find the definition of a word that you don’t know?
- Have you ever been confused about the meaning (definition) of a word?

To Introduce this story say: In this story, a girl in 5th grade named Sage gets embarrassed after she gives an incorrect answer for one of her weekly vocabulary words because she thought she already knew the word. As we read *Miss Alaineus*, listen for word definitions within the story.



**Questions
After Reading:**

- How did Sage feel after she gave the wrong definition for miscellaneous?
- Do you remember a time when you gave an answer that you were sure was correct, but turned out to be wrong?
- How do you think Debra Frasier (who's both the author and illustrator for this book) created the illustrations for this book?
- What does Sage's mom mean when she tells her "there's gold in every mistake?"
- What are some other words that could be misinterpreted?

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Art:

- Discuss how Debra Frasier (the author/illustrator) created the illustrations for this book. (Read the author/illustrator information on the back inside cover of the book.)
- Using lined notebook paper and watercolor markers, create colorful scenes like those used by Debra Frasier in the book's illustrations.

Dramatization:

- Host a Vocabulary Parade like the one described in Mrs. Page's letter to students and parents. For more detailed planning information and to view other suggested activities, visit Debra Frasier's website at <http://www.debrafrasier.com/pages/books/msa.html>

Language:

- Write a sentence using three words that begin with the same letter, and get more details on this activity by reading **Extra! Extra! Extra Credit for Mrs. Page's Fifth-Grade Students!** in the book.
- In **Sage's Vocabulary Parade Scrapbook**, read aloud her note about her costumes and also Mrs. Joanne Page's letter to students and parents, as well as the Vocabulary Parade Rules. Discuss vocabulary word costume possibilities.
- Create block word finds similar to those on the end pages of the book. Tell how the letters on the end pages are not random. Instead, they include hidden words.

**Suggestions for
English Language
Learners:**

- Discuss some words that have multiple meanings that can be confusing.
- Look for hidden words in the word finds on the book's end pages.
- Choose one of Sage's extra credit vocabulary word sentences along the page edges and look up the definitions. Teach the use of guide words and pronunciation keys while using the dictionary.
- Create a short list of vocabulary words that are part of a theme.

Related Books:

- ***The Alphabet Keeper*** by Mary Murphy (Knopf, 2003)
- ***Word Wizard*** by Cathryn Falwell (Clarion, 1998)
- ***Donovan's Word Jar*** by Monalisa DeGross (HarperCollins, 1998)
- ***The Word Eater*** by Mary Amato (Holiday House, 2000)
- ***Frindle*** by Andrew Clements (Simon & Schuster, 1996)
- ***Elbert's Bad Word*** by Audrey Wood, illustrated by Audrey and Don Wood (Harcourt, 1988)

