



CURIOUS GEORGE

by
H. A. Rey

Would you like to be able to balance on telephone wires the way *George* or a clown in the circus can? It's simple if you can change your center of gravity!

The monkey and clown are stable and can balance on their chin/nose because their centers of gravity are directly beneath these body parts which are the points of their support. Their centers of gravity have been changed because they have equal weights (pennies) in each hand. Gravity pulls equally on both hands and the chin/nose is half-way between.

MATERIALS: Monkey or clown pattern (enlarge pattern for size appropriate for age level); markers or crayons; scissors; rubber cement or glue stick; 2 pennies with the same date if possible

ACTIVITY: Step #1. Copy pattern on copy paper; other kinds of paper are too heavy and lack flexibility.

Step #2. Begin class with a piece of string tied across the room with monkeys/clown balancing, or ask for 2 students to come up and hold a piece of string. Place a monkey or clown on the string; add several more in different sizes.

Step #3. Ask your class why they are able to balance without falling. Talk about gravity and how it holds them on their chairs or in an upright position. Discuss the "center" of the monkey or clown.

Step #4. Let students discover the "secret" or "magic" behind this balancing by passing the monkeys/clowns around.

Step #5. Students should make their own *Curious George* or clown and take them home to mystify their families and to spread the knowledge of science. They balance beautifully on the eraser end of a pencil.

SOURCE: A "five-minute demo" given at the 1990 ICE Institute Activities

Workshop, University of Wisconsin/Madison.

TEACHER NOTES: I have included a pattern for a girl and a cat. This is a great activity to use with Mirette on a High Wire by Helen McCully and High Wire Henry by Mary Calhoun. For very young children, the letter H or any symmetrical letter in block form can be used. This shape is quicker for the teacher to cut out. The monkey and clown patterns can be enlarged.

STANDARDS:

BSL: 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 3.1, 3.3, 6.3, 11.2, 11.4, 12.1, 12.5

NCTM: 2a, 4d, 5a, 6a, 9b

SCS: A1, B1, D1, H3, H4

TEACHER NOTES: **Caution:** The mass of a penny prior to 1983 was c. 3.1 g and after 1984 c. 2.5 g; the easiest way to avoid problems is to use pennies with the same date. However, this *could become* a problem-solving activity if some students' monkeys/clowns do not balance. Have them check the dates of their pennies to make sure they don't have one before 1983 and one after 1984.

Rey, H. A. Curious George. Houghton Mifflin Co., c1941. ISBN#0-395-15023-X.





