One hot Monday in early September, Martin arrived at school with a bellyache. But when he walked into the classroom, he almost forgot all about it.

Mr. Whiskers had a wild look in his eyes, the kind that said something fun was going to happen. There were science kits set up at tables and even outside in the schoolyard. Lots of kids had questions about the kits, but when Mr. Whiskers waved his silence wand, everyone quieted down.
“What’s the matter with your stomach, Martin?” whispered Ashley.

“Matter? Did I hear someone say matter?” Mr. Whiskers asked. “That’s exactly what we are going to explore today. Matter is stuff, and I have lots of stuff for you to play with.”

All the kids wanted to see the stuff, but first Mr. Whiskers pointed out the rules for explorer time.

When he tooted the horn, everyone scattered. Some kids looked at the kits in the classroom, and some checked out the science stations in the schoolyard.
RULES

Start to play when you hear the horn.

Share with other people.

Change groups whenever you wish or when it's too crowded.

Be gentle with things and people.

Have fun.

Help put everything away when I beat the drum.
WATER DROPPERS

Martin, Cory, and Miguel dashed to a table set up with water droppers, leaves, bottle caps, and other things. Cory sucked up some water with a dropper and then squirted it out. Martin watched. “What are you doing, Cory?” he asked.

“Making bubbles,” she answered.

Miguel covered a leaf with drops of water and discovered they stuck there. Then he counted as he filled a bottle cap with drops.
“Let’s do something really fun,” Cory announced. She pretended the dropper was a drippy nose. Willie cruised by and looked at Cory but didn’t stay to play.

I need a tissue!

That’s gross, Cory.
Miguel stuck drops to a pencil, a paper clip, his fingernail, and even to Mr. Whiskers’ nose.

“Does water take up space?” Mr. Whiskers asked.
“Water fills up my dropper,” said Martin.
Miguel replied, “Drops can fill up a bottle cap.”
“Look! Bubbles take up space,” Cory announced.
“Toys take up a lot of space in my room.” Martin said. “Too much space, my mom says. Hey, maybe everything takes up space.”
“That’s the big idea,” Mr. Whiskers told him. “All matter takes up space!”
GLOOP

Martin saw Larry and Ashley over at a table with some interesting blue gloopy stuff. He got there just as Larry grabbed as much of the gloop as he could. “Mine, all mine!” Larry said.

“Larry, you’re supposed to share,” Ashley reminded him. “Now give some to Martin and me.”

Larry frowned but gave a bit to each of the others.
Cory came over and took a chunk from Larry too.

“Hey, this feels like rubber,” she said.

“It looks like taffy,” said Martin.

“It stretches,” said Ashley. “Maybe we can add all of ours together and make a snake.”
“Maybe we can make candy and eat it,” added Martin. “Yum!”
“Martin,” Mr. Whiskers called out just as Martin was about to taste some gloop. “Remember, we don’t eat any matter during science class, no matter how good it looks.”
Ashley said, “Look, Mr. Whiskers. It stretches!”

It’s squishy and stretchy and bubbly.
OOBLECK

"Hey, Pearl, what's that stuff?" called Cory as she sat down between Pearl and Miguel at another science station.
They had green slimy stuff dripping from their fingers and squashed between their palms.
"It's oobleck and it changes from hard to soft and back again," Pearl said.
“It’s like magic,” Miguel said. “It’s hard when it’s in the dish, but it’s drippy when you pick it up.”
Martin and Lupita ambled over to the group.
Cory pretended she was sick and cried out, “I’m throwing up green gunk!”
“It’s kind of like glue—maybe it would glue your mouth up,” Martin said.
“Maybe I can glue my hands together,” said Miguel.
Mr. Whiskers squeezed some oobleck and let it drip through his fingers.
“Do you think this is a liquid, like milk, or a solid, like a cookie?” he asked Cory.

“Sometimes it drips, and sometimes it’s solid,” she answered.
“It’s kind of like a milk shake and kind of like ice cream,” added Martin.
Cory wandered outdoors into the warm sunshine. She spied the blocks of ice that Mrs. Sanchez, the classroom aide, was placing on the blacktop for another science kit. Then Cory set to work inventing an ice-melting machine with mirrors and tinfoil.

“What are you doing, Cory?” Ashley asked.

“I’m going to cook the ice,” Cory replied.

Miguel came by and started to write on the blacktop with water and a paintbrush.
“Do you think water will melt the ice?” Ashley asked Cory.
Cory thought for a minute, then said, “I know soda melts ice
 cubes.”
“I sprayed some ice with water, and it melted the ice,” Ashley
reported.
“My name disappeared from the ground,” Miguel added. “Maybe
I invented disappearing ink.”
Cory asked, “Do you think my ice-melting machine is working?”

The ice is shrinking!
When Mr. Whiskers walked by, Miguel called out, “Come and see the disappearing ink.”
Mr. Whiskers examined the blacktop and then asked, “Where did the water ink go? Do you think the water changed to something else?”
“I saw steam,” Miguel said.
ROCKS

Ashley went looking for Larry, and found him inside at a table covered with rocks, scales, magnifying lenses, cups of water, tiles, and other things.

She peered at a rock through a magnifying lens and saw sparkles. Larry scraped one rock against another and rubbed his finger over the scratches that he had made. Then he made scratches on other rocks.
Ashley put little rocks on one side of the scale. When she put a big rock on the other side, it sank down.

“Look,” she said to Martin, who had wandered over. “This rock is heavier than three little ones.”

“This little one looks like a pill,” Martin said, and he almost swallowed it but remembered what Mr. Whiskers had said. He dropped it in the water, and it changed color.

Hmm... which one is heaviest?

Colors, cool!
Ashley ran over to Mr. Whiskers and pulled him to the table.
“I found the heavyweight rock,” she told him.
“Do all rocks have weight?” Mr. Whiskers asked.
“Of course. I think everything has weight,” said Ashley.
“If I ate something, I’d have more weight,” said Martin.
“If you gave me all the rocks, I’d have a lot of weight,” said Larry.
Mr. Whiskers said, “Yes, that’s another big idea. All matter has weight!”

I think my rock is the heaviest.