

Lizzie's Hidden Message

Before Reading

Motivation / Purpose

The purpose of this text is to entertain the reader with a story about solving a message contained in the panels of a quilt used to help slaves escape during the American Civil War.

Text Type

Draw students' attention to the:

- title
- illustrations
- chapter headings.

Ask, 'What type of book is this?' (Narrative).

Visual Literacy

Look at the quilt depicted on the front cover. What will the text be about?

Read the first chapter and talk about the 'hidden message'. Where do you think the hidden message will be found? What do you think the message is?

Background Knowledge

Discuss occasions when you have been able to decipher hidden messages. What information helped you? Talk about the materials used to convey the message. Why do people make messages that need to be worked out?

Phonological Awareness

Make sure students know the following phonological patterns:

- /er/: nurse (p.4), worked (p.7), pattern (p.14)
- long a: stay (p.4), great (p.6), same (p.7), explained (p.13), table (p.20)

Set a time limit and select a letter combination. Ask students to write as many words as possible within the given timeframe which contain that sound/letter combination.

Discuss words with a consonant followed by 'y', which change the 'y' to 'i' before adding -ed.

Vocabulary

ancestor, attic, cabin, captured, chest, civil, curious, disappointed, essay, ordered, punished, quilt, seamstress, slave, slavery, tracking, treasure, valuable

High Frequency Words

because, enough, family, farmer, free, garden, nights, slave, thought, years

Make single copies of high frequency words on cards and cut each one in half. Place the cards face down and allow students to turn over two pieces at a time. If the pieces make a word, the students keep the word. If the pieces don't match, the cards are turned face down and the next player takes a turn.

During Reading

Vocabulary in Context

Look at how some antonyms (opposites) are made in the text. Discuss the words 'unfolded' and 'disappointed'. Make a list of other known words which make their opposites by using the prefixes *dis-* or *un-* (e.g. dislike, disappear, disjointed, unfair, undone, unhappy). Discuss the term 'Civil War' and other uses of the term 'civil' (e.g. civil defence, civil engineer, civilian, civilisation, civil law, civil rights, civil servants).

Checking for Meaning

Literal:

Where did Gran keep her most valuable treasure? (In a chest in the attic)

How was the quilt made? (Small pieces of left-over material were stitched together in small patterns, and the patterns stitched together to make the quilt.)

How did the quilt help the slaves to escape? (The patterns made up a map, which told the slaves how to get to the next 'safe house'.)

Inferential:

Why do you think the quilt was Gran's 'most valuable treasure'?

Why would Lizzie have been worried that her brother would be sold to another farmer?



Who will eventually get Lizzie's quilt? Why?

Make sure students understand the difference between literal and inferential information.

Response:

What do you think would be some of the most difficult aspects of being a slave?

Why did some people want to help the slaves escape?

Grammatical Patterns

Make sure students understand the following components of a narrative:

- Orientation – introduces the main characters and the setting; (p.4)
- Complication – the sequence of events develops a problem for the characters: Beth's Gran shows her a quilt from the American Civil War and asks her to solve the puzzle of the map made for the slaves. (pp.5–21)
- Resolution – the problem is solved: Beth works out the message hidden in the quilt. (pp.22–23)
- Coda – explain how the characters have changed and what has been learnt: Beth learns how this story has been passed from one generation to the next. (p.24)
- Use of particular nouns to refer to particular people and things: nurse (p.4), quilt (p.7), slave (p.8), cotton (p.10), grandchild (p.24)
- Use of adjectives to describe nouns: Civil (p.4), tracking (p.12), beautiful (p.14), left-over (p.14)
- Use of time connectives to sequence events through time: One night (p.4), On Friday night after dinner (p.10), Then (p.14), Tomorrow (p.18)
- Use of adverbs and adverbial phrases to locate particular events: before the Civil War (p.5), excitedly (p.6), carefully (p.6), on the clothes line outside the cabin (p.16)
- Use of past tense action verbs to indicate the actions: began (p.10), captured (p.12), stitched (p.14), hung (p.16), pointed (p.23)
- Use of saying and thinking verbs: asked (p.4), replied (p.9), knew (p.17), think (p.19), imagined (p.22)

Fluency / Punctuation Patterns

Model the reading of sentences which have commas that allow for additional information to be inserted: *Lizzie was clever, too, Gran explained* (p.13). Allow students to echo your readings before attempting to read them independently.

These punctuation patterns occur in the text:

- Single quotation marks are used to indicate titles: *'Describe the life of an American living before the Civil War'* (p.4), *'Flying Geese'*, *'Bear's Paw'* or *'Nine Patch'* (p.14)
- Capital letters are used for the most important words in the title: (p.4)

- A capital letter is not used for the second part of a split quotation, where the second part is a continuation of the first sentence: *"Yes," said Gran, "and you have the same name."* (p.7)
- A dash is used to indicate a pause in the sentence: *"What do you mean – a slave?"* (p.8)

Critical Literacy

Why do you think the author might have written this text? What aspects of war are being explored?

How would this story be different if it had been told by one of the cotton farmers?

Linking Visual and Written

Look at the illustrations on pages 11, 12 and 15. Compare these illustrations with those in Chapter 1, and talk about the ways in which the illustrator has depicted the two differing periods in time.

Examine the three illustrations on page 14. Read the captions, and talk about how the quilt makers were able to code information into their quilts.

After Reading

Use the Internet or the library to find out more about the condition slaves endured during the Civil War. Find out who was responsible for eliminating the slave trade in America. Write a biography of this person.

Activities

Students will:

- match sentences with similar meanings and locate page references
- use a spelling generalisation to complete new words
- write vocabulary words using a bank of letters
- identify structural and grammatical elements in a narrative text.

Comprehension (meaning) Vocabulary (structure) Phonics (visual) Writing (structure)

