

Read. Think. Explain.

In trying to understand a poem, it's important to read through it carefully and thoughtfully by focusing on the words the author chose *and* by thinking about the poem's big ideas. In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about Claudia Lewis's "Three Skies" in order to grasp its full meaning.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the poem to back up your ideas.

1. What three different colors of sky does the poem describe? What does each one represent?

2. You can figure out that the narrator of the poem is imagining moving in what direction through the sky?

3. What is the significance of the zipper in the illustration?

4. What does the poem ask in its last line? What are your own ideas for answering this question?

Read. Think. Explain.

In trying to understand a poem, it's important to read through it carefully and thoughtfully, focusing on the words the author chose *and* thinking about the poem's big ideas. In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about Maya Angelou's "Life Doesn't Frighten Me" to grasp its full meaning.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the poem to back up your ideas.

1. What line (or variation of that) is repeated throughout the poem? What effect does this repetition have?

2. What are some of the experiences that don't frighten the narrator?

3. Who might be frightened by these things? Who could the narrator be?

4. Even though the poem is written in the voice of a young child, how do you think it appeals to people of all ages? What is its universal message?

Who is Maya Angelou?

In this activity, you'll learn about Maya Angelou, the writer who created the powerful poem "Life Doesn't Frighten Me." You'll also learn great new words and their synonyms! (Synonyms are two different words that share the same meaning.)

Directions: For each word in the word bank below, find its synonym in bold in the article, and write it in the blank on the right.

Maya Angelou was born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. After her **destitute** parents got divorced when she was 3 years old, she was sent to live with her grandmother in the **rural** town of Stamps, Arkansas. There, Maya had her first **encounter** with racial **prejudice**—an experience that would **recur** throughout her life.

But Maya wasn't **deterred**. And she wasn't **afraid**. When she was 16, she became the first African-American **trolley** conductor in San Francisco. In her 20s, she recorded an album, *Calypso Lady*. She also **formally** changed her name to Maya Angelou.

By the time she was 35, Maya had lived all over the world. She wrote for a **prominent** magazine in Cairo, Egypt. In Ghana, she taught singing and acting. And she learned to speak five other languages: French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, and the West African language Fanti.

When she returned to America in 1964, she decided to try something different, once again. She worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King in speaking out against racial **injustice**. And she became one of the most **respected** voices in the civil rights movement.

In addition to her dozens of books and screenplays, Maya wrote *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, a **moving memoir** about her childhood. And, of course, there's her poetry. In 1993, Bill Clinton was looking for an inspiring person to speak at his presidential **inauguration**. He chose Maya. In front of thousands of people and a **worldwide** TV audience, she read her poem "On the Pulse of the Morning." With that, she **cemented** her place as one of the most powerful voices of our nation.

Word Bank	
distinguished	_____
autobiography	_____
bucolic	_____
induction	_____
admired	_____
secured	_____
discouraged	_____
cable car	_____
poor	_____
touching	_____
officially	_____
unfairness	_____
run-in	_____
repeat	_____
frightened	_____
discrimination	_____
global	_____

Secrets From Great Writers!

THIS MONTH'S SECRET: HOW TO WRITE A GREAT DESCRIPTION

The article "Lost in a Blizzard" is filled with amazing descriptions that create bold, vivid pictures in readers' minds. This activity will tell you one of Lauren Tarshis's description-writing secrets that will help you add punch to your own writing.

Directions: Read this passage from "Lost in a Blizzard," by Lauren Tarshis. Then rewrite the sentences below.

All morning, Walter Allen sat at his desk working on his arithmetic problems as his teacher walked around the room offering help, her skirts swishing and boots clicking against the worn wooden floorboards. After finishing each problem set, he took a tiny perfume bottle from his desk, removed the jewel-like lid, and poured a drop of water onto his writing slate. The bottle was Walter's prized possession. All of the other children kept small bottles of water and rags at their desks to wipe their slates clean. Nobody but Walter had a bottle that looked like it came from a pirate's treasure chest.

If you read the passage above closely, you can see how Lauren creates vivid, interesting pictures with language. Notice how she doesn't just tell us that the "teacher walks around the room," she describes the sights and sounds of the "skirts swishing and boots clicking," and the "worn wooden floorboards." She also uses great description to show us how the characters feel about these objects. Walter's perfume bottle is not a typical glass bottle. The "jewel-like lid" that seems to come from "a pirate's treasure chest" describes the beautiful object, but also lets us see just how precious Walter considers his bottle to be. Lauren layers her descriptions like a triple-decker cake—visual details, noises, impressions—so you get a wonderfully vivid picture with sights, sounds, and feelings. Use Lauren's trick to rewrite the sentences below.

1. The couple danced. (**Hint:** What dance did they do? Was it fast? Slow? Complicated? What were they wearing? What music was playing?)

Continued

Secrets From Great Writers! page 2

2. The puppy played fetch. (**Hint:** What did he look like? Who played with him? How did they feel? Did the puppy race, wriggle, wander?)

3. The house was big.

4. Skating was cold.

5. The phone rang.

Read. Think. Explain.

In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about "Lost in a Blizzard" that will help you think more deeply about the events surrounding the Blizzard of 1888.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the article to back up your ideas. Use a separate piece of paper if you need more room.

1. Why were children happy to get up and go to school on January 12, 1888?

2. According to the story, what did the sky look like? What did it mean?

3. What details in the story illustrate how sudden and terrible the blizzard was?

4. The Blizzard of 1888 is often called the Schoolchildren's Blizzard. Based on what you read in this article, explain why this is an appropriate name for the storm.

5. What lesson(s) do you think Walter Allen learned when he regained consciousness?

A Flurry of Words

Don't get caught in a flurry of words without knowing what they mean! "Lost in a Blizzard" uses many interesting words, but you may not know them yet. In this activity, you will use the dictionary and your very own brain to match the words below to their definitions.

Directions: Match the words on the left to the definitions on the right.
Then choose four of the words and write a sentence using each.

collision	helping someone to do something
enabling	endlessly
ferry	ate greedily
harrowing	started moving
infinitely	carry from one place to another
lingered	showing surprise and wonder
marveling	high speed crash
mobilized	ran lightly and quickly
scampered	extremely upsetting
wolfed	waited around

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Sentence 3: _____

Sentence 4: _____

A-MAZING Facts & Opinions

A fact is a statement that can be proved correct. An opinion is a statement that expresses what somebody thinks about a topic. "Lost in a Blizzard" is full of facts and opinions. In this activity, you will practice telling the difference between facts and opinions.

Directions: Read each bubble below and decide which are facts and which are opinions. Then, circle all the bubbles that contain facts. Draw a line through the maze, connecting each bubble that contains a fact. You'll know you've done the activity correctly when you reach the sun!

Start

Read. Think. Explain.

In trying to understand an article, it's important to read through it carefully and thoughtfully, focusing on the words the author chose *and* thinking about the article's big ideas. In this activity, you'll answer a series of questions about the Monkees and the Naked Brothers Band to learn more about how the two bands are alike and how they are different.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the article to back up your ideas.

1. How did adults' view of the Monkees differ from that of teenagers? Why do you think adults objected to the group and their TV show?

2. What are some styles that the Monkees made popular?

3. How did the Wolff brothers view themselves before they became famous? How do you think their attitude affected them?

4. What is the difference between the Naked Brothers Band's television show and their album? Which is closer to their dreams?

5. In what ways are the Monkees and the Naked Brothers Band different? If you could join one of these bands, which would it be? Why?

Five & Five

In this activity, you will compare and contrast hit-making TV bands the Monkees and the Naked Brothers Band using this month's "Yesterday & Today" feature.

Directions: In the box on the left, write five facts about the Monkees that you learned from the "Yesterday & Today" article. In the box on the right, write five facts about the Naked Brothers Band.

Facts	
The Monkees	The Naked Brothers Band
1. _____ _____	1. _____ _____
2. _____ _____	2. _____ _____
3. _____ _____	3. _____ _____
4. _____ _____	4. _____ _____
5. _____ _____	5. _____ _____

Critical Thinking

Use your list to write a well-organized paragraph in which you compare and contrast the television bands the Monkees and the Naked Brothers Band. (Use a separate piece of paper.)

Read. Think. Explain.

An active reader is always looking for big ideas and deeper meaning in a story. In this activity, you'll answer questions about the character and the author's message in "The Day the Worms Moved In."

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the story to back up your ideas. Use a separate piece of paper if you need more room.

1. Why is Maddie so afraid of worms?

2. What are some details that illustrate Maddie's adverse reaction to worms? Why do you think she keeps her phobia a secret?

3. What choices does Maddie consider when she sees that worms are escaping from the compost bin? What does the choice she makes show about her?

4. What main message do you think the author would like you to take away from this story?

Solve Vocab U. Larry's Puzzle

Larry found lots of great vocabulary words in the story, "The Day the Worms Moved In."
Use Larry's words (listed below) to solve his puzzle.

Directions: Using the words in the bank below, find a synonym for each numbered word, and write it in the blanks next to it. One letter from each word will fall into the dotted oval. Use those letters to complete the sentence at the bottom of the page.

bacteria	bales	burrow	comprehend	cooed
panic	severe	smear	tear	tinged

1. serious	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. slightly colored	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. talked fondly	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. dig a hole	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. rubbed something on a surface	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. a sudden feeling of great terror	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. microscopic living things	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. move very quickly	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. understand	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. large bundles tied together	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

By the end of the story, "The Day the Worms Moved In," Maddie has overcome

ANSWER: _____

9. 1. 8. 4. 3. 8. 5. 6. 9. 3. 10. 2. 7.

How Maddie Changes

In this activity, you will think about the ways in which Maddie's character changes from the beginning to the end of Marlane Kennedy's story "The Day the Worms Moved In."

Directions: As you read "The Day the Worms Moved In," take notes on how Maddie's ideas and attitudes change throughout the story. Complete the chart below to help you.

| | Beginning | End |
|---|---|---|
| What Maddie Thinks of Worms | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| What Maddie Thinks of Billy Peppercorn | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |

Continued ►►

How Maddie Changes page 2

| | Beginning | End |
|---|---|---|
| What Maddie Thinks of Her Mother | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| What Maddie Thinks of Herself | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |

Critical Thinking

Maddie’s experience with the worms causes her to change in significant ways. On a separate piece of paper, write a well-organized paragraph about this topic. Make sure to support your ideas using information and details from the chart you created above.

Read. Think. Explain.

An active reader is always looking for big ideas and deeper meaning in a play by paying attention to things like dialogue, character development, setting, and the sequence in which events happen. In this activity, you'll answer questions about these elements in *The Tale of Despereaux*.

Directions: Answer the questions below, using information and details from the play to back up your ideas.

1. In the first scene, the Kingdom of Dor is preparing for a holiday. What genre, or kind of story, does the scene suggest the play will be? Why?

2. Roscuro is different from other rats. What details from the story show how he is different? What details show how Despereaux is different from other mice?

3. What does Roscuro want from Despereaux? Why?

4. What do you predict will happen next in the story? How do you think it will end?

Despereaux's Dictionary

Those are some big words for a tiny mouse! The brave creature needs some tough words to describe his dangerous adventures. But you don't have to fear! In this activity, you will use the dictionary and your own knowledge to match the words below with their definitions.

Directions: Match the words on the left with the definitions on the right.
Then choose four of the words, and write a sentence using each.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| banquet | a light fixture that hangs from a ceiling |
| cast | vapors or gas given off by something hot |
| chandelier | sent away from your own country |
| cower | a formal meal for a large number of people |
| exiled | wanting something very much |
| filthy | shrink away from something scary |
| fumes | punishment |
| gnarled | thrown |
| longing | twisted and lumpy with age |
| penalty | dirty or foul |

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Sentence 3: _____

Sentence 4: _____

What Happened and Why?

The princess kisses a frog. What happens next? The frog turns into a prince. Cinderella's carriage turns back into a pumpkin. Why did this happen? Because the clock struck midnight. Even in the fantasy world of fairy tales, it's easy to figure out cause-and-effect relationships by asking two questions: "What happens next?" (to find the effect) and "Why did this happen?" (to find the cause). In this activity, you will find the causes and effects in *The Tale of Despereaux*.

Directions: Fill in what's missing from each cause-and-effect pair. Use the hints to help you.

1. CAUSE: _____

EFFECT: The King bans rats and soup in the Kingdom of Dor.

HINT: *What happened to the Queen on National Soup Day?*

2. CAUSE: Chef Andre throws a bottle of red wine at Boldo, the soup genie.

EFFECT: _____

HINT: *Are the two happy with the soup they made?*

3. CAUSE: Despereaux sneaks into the castle and reads a book about a princess.

EFFECT: _____

HINT: *What does he do after reading the book?*

4. CAUSE: _____

EFFECT: Despereaux gets exiled from the mouse community.

HINT: *How do the mice feel about talking to humans?*

Now, on your own, find two cause-and-effect relationships from the story.

5. CAUSE: _____

EFFECT: _____

6. CAUSE: _____

EFFECT: _____

