

### About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 800

### Book Summary

Land mines are a serious problem in Mozambique and other countries around the world. Every year, thousands of people are hurt or killed by these dangerous, hidden weapons. *HeroRATS: Rats Who Save Lives* tells how some unlikely heroes are helping solve the land mine problems. Specially trained rats can make the land safe for people to use for farming, building, or playing. Students have the opportunity to ask and answer questions as well as identify the main idea and supporting details. Photographs, captions, and a map support the text.

### About the Lesson

#### Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

#### Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand text
- Identify main idea and supporting details
- Identify initial consonant *r*-blends
- Recognize and use simple adjectives
- Identify and use suffixes

#### Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website.

- Book—*HeroRATS: Rats Who Save Lives* (copy for each student)
- Picture of a land mine
- Dictionaries
- Highlighters
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Ask and answer questions, main idea and details, adjectives, suffixes worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

#### Vocabulary

\*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on [VocabularyA-Z.com](http://VocabularyA-Z.com).

- Content words:  
 Story critical: **explosives** (n.), **handlers** (n.), **program** (n.), **rodents** (n.), **sniffing** (v.), **trained** (v.)  
 Enrichment: **alert** (v.), **detect** (v.), **inspecting** (v.)

### Before Reading

#### Build Background

- Write the phrase *land mine* on the board and point to the word as you read it aloud to students. Explain that land mines are weapons buried underground that are set to blow up when people step on them. They were used in wars that ended years ago, but the land mines were left behind. Discuss the dangers associated with this type of weapon.

## Lesson Plan *(continued)*

## HeroRATS: Rats Who Save Lives

- Show students the photograph of a land mine. Ask what questions they have about land mines. Record their questions on the board.

### Preview the Book

#### Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, fiction or nonfiction, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).

#### Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Explain to students that good readers help themselves understand what they are reading by asking questions before, during, and after reading. Discuss with students how asking questions will help them understand and remember what they read.
- Model how to ask questions as you preview the book.  
*Think-aloud: Before I start reading, I usually have several questions that come to mind about the topic or title of a book. From what I see on the cover and title page, it appears that this book is all about rats who are trained to save peoples' lives. I wonder what they are trained to do and how they save lives. I know we discussed land mines earlier in the lesson. I wonder if the rats might have something to do with finding these dangerous weapons. I also wonder who first had the idea to train rats to save lives. As I read, I will be curious to see if I can discover the answers to my questions. This helps me understand what I am reading and makes reading enjoyable.*
- Introduce and explain the [ask-and-answer-questions worksheet](#) to students. Have them write one or two questions in the first section of their worksheet. Invite students to share some of their questions. Add any new ones to the list on the board.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

#### Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Main idea and details**

- Explain that a book has a general topic that is the subject of the book; this is the *main idea* of the book. The extra information or descriptions that help us to better understand the book are the *details*. Explain to students that we need both the main idea and details in order to fully understand and enjoy a book.
- Explain that sometimes there is so much information on a topic that it is grouped into sections, and each section has its own main idea. Often, the reader must carefully determine the main idea as well as the extra details that support or enhance the main idea.
- Read page 3 aloud to students. Model how to identify the main idea and details of this section.  
*Think-aloud: As I read the first page, I noticed that it talked about land mines. The page gave information about what land mines are, where they are located, and why they are a problem. Based on the information I have read, I think the main idea for this section is: Land mines are a serious problem in Mozambique.*
- Show students a copy of the [main-idea-and-details worksheet](#). Write the main-idea sentence in the correct bubble. Ask students to identify the details from the paragraph that support this main idea (*land mines are weapons buried underground, they blow up when people step on them, used in the war but many were left behind, thousands of people are hurt or killed by them*). Write these details in the appropriate bubbles.

#### Introduce the Vocabulary

- Write the following words from the content vocabulary on the board: *explosives, handlers, and trained*.

## Lesson Plan *(continued)*

## HeroRATS: Rats Who Save Lives


- Point out that these three words can be found in the text and that knowing what they mean will help students understand what they are reading. Divide students into pairs and assign each pair one of the content vocabulary words. Give each pair a piece of blank paper and have them write their word at the top of their paper. Have them write or draw what they know about the word and create a definition using their own prior knowledge.
- Model how students can use a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have them locate the word *explosive* in the dictionary. Invite a volunteer to read the definition for *explosive*.
- Show students the glossary at the back of the book. Have students locate the word *explosive* in the glossary. Point out that the dictionary has multiple definitions for the word *explosive*, depending on the usage. Have students compare the dictionary definition with the glossary definition, and ask them which dictionary definition is closest. Have them compare this definition with their prior knowledge of the word.
- Finally, have students turn to page 9 in the book and read the sentence in which the word *explosive* is found. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words. Ask students to compare and contrast the three sources—the dictionary, the glossary, and the text.

### Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about HeroRATs and land mines. Remind them to ask and answer questions while reading.



## During Reading

### Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read from page 4 to the end of page 8. Encourage those who finish early to reread the text. After they finish reading, ask students to go back and look at their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet and circle or highlight any questions that were answered in this part of the text.
- Model answering a question and filling in the second section of the ask-and-answer-questions worksheet.  
*Think-aloud: Before reading, more than one question came to mind about this book. I was curious about what the rats do to save people's lives and who came up with this idea. While reading, I discovered that the rats locate land mines using their powerful noses. I also learned that a man named Bart Weetjens came up with the idea. I will write these answers on the ask-and-answer-questions worksheet.*
- Ask students to write answers to any questions they raised on their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read the book.
- Model identifying the main idea and details for a specific paragraph of the book.  
*Think-aloud: The paragraph on page 6 contains information about Castro the HeroRAT and how he comes to the rescue. I learned that he uses his nose to find land mines and scratches the ground when he smells one. Scratching alerts his human partner. Castro gets a yummy treat when he is done. I will highlight this information. On the basis of what I've read so far, I think I can use the first sentence on this page as the main idea of this paragraph: Castro is a HeroRAT who helps save lives in Mozambique.*
-  Ask students to highlight the same words and phrases in their book. Next, model writing the main idea in the appropriate space on another blank main-idea-and-details worksheet. Ask students to assist you in identifying the details that support this main idea. Remind them to refer to the words and phrases they highlighted. Record their responses in the appropriate bubbles on the worksheet.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 7 and 8. Have them write answers on their worksheet that they found while reading. Have them record any additional questions that come to mind as they read. Invite them to share the information they have learned and the questions they asked as they read these pages.

## Lesson Plan *(continued)*

## HeroRATS: Rats Who Save Lives

-  Have students work in pairs to read pages 7 and 8, underlining or highlighting the important words and phrases. Instruct them to work with their partner to identify the main idea of the section.
- Give students a two-sided copy of the main-idea-and-details worksheet so they have two copies of the graphic organizer. Have them work in pairs to record the main idea and then use their highlighted words and phrases to record the supporting details. Check individual responses for understanding.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to look for and write answers to their questions from their worksheet. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their worksheet as they read.
-  Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

### After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

### Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for answers while reading, keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they read.
- **Think-aloud:** *Before reading, I wanted to know about these rats. Now I know how these rats help save people's lives by locating land mines so humans can remove them. I also know that the people who work with the rats are proud to make their countries safe. I understand why these special rats are called HeroRATS. I will record this information at the bottom of my chart.*
- **Independent practice:** Point out to students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this book. Brainstorm other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions (websites, books, and so on). Invite students to write on their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet one or two more questions they still have about HeroRATS. Ask them to share the questions they added.

### Reflect on the Comprehension Skill


- **Discussion:** Discuss how stopping to review the important details helped students remember the facts and better understand the big ideas in the book.
- **Independent practice:** Have students complete the other side of their main-idea-and-details worksheet using one of the remaining paragraphs in the book.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned many facts about rats who help find land mines. They are considered heroes for the work they are trained to do. Now that you know this information, do you think there are other heroes in this book? If so, who are they?

### Build Skills


#### Phonics: Initial consonant r-blends

- Write the word *trained* on the board. Say the word aloud, stressing the *tr* blend. Have students say the word aloud. Explain that when two consonants are next to each other, they blend together to make one sound. Circle the *tr* in *trained*. Point to the word *trained* on the board and have the class pronounce it aloud.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the word *program* on the board and ask students to read it aloud. Ask what sound the *pr* makes. Circle the *pr* in *program*. Repeat the exercise with the words *ground*, *proud*, and *frown*.

### Grammar and Mechanics: Adjectives

- Review or explain that *adjectives* are words that describe nouns or pronouns. An adjective tells *which one, how many, or what kind*.
- Write the following sentences on the board: Ask students to count the number of adjectives in each sentence.  
He uses his cute, twitchy nose to find land mines.  
Castro gets a yummy treat for hard work.  
They are too light to set off the weapons.
- Have volunteers come to the board and circle the adjectives in each sentence (*cute, twitchy, yummy, hard, light*). Then have different volunteers underline the noun or pronoun that each adjective describes (*nose, treat, work, they*). Discuss how writers sometimes use two or three adjectives to describe one noun (for example, *cute* and *twitchy* both describe *nose*).
- Explain that the adjective doesn't always precede the noun or pronoun, as seen in the third sentence (*light*). Point to the circled adjective in the third sentence (*light*). Ask students to determine whether the adjective tells which one, how many, or what kind (it describes what kind of animals). Repeat the exercise with the other adjectives in the other two sentences.
-  **Check for understanding:** Give students highlighters and have them work in pairs to reread page 10. Have them highlight all of the adjectives they find. Discuss their findings as a group, identifying the noun that each adjective describes and determining whether the adjective is telling which one, how many, or what kind.
- Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [adjectives worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

### Word Work: Suffixes

- Review or explain that a *suffix* is a syllable added to the end of a word to change its meaning. Two examples of common suffixes are *-ed* and *-ing*.
- Write the word *trained* on the board. Ask students what the root word is and write *train* next to *trained*. Explain that the word *train* is the verb in the sentence *He will train the rat*. The action (*train*) is taking place in the present tense. When the *-ed* suffix is added to the verb *train*, the action becomes past tense (*trained*) such as in the sentence *He trained the rat yesterday*. Point out how the suffix changed the meaning of the word.
- Repeat the exercise by writing the verbs *inspect*, *locate*, and *sniff* on the board. Have a volunteer use each word in a sentence. Have another volunteer come to the board and add the *-ed* suffix to each word. Have students use the past-tense verbs in oral sentences with a partner. Listen to check for individual student understanding.
- Write the words *train*, *sniff*, and *inspect* on the board. Have students work in pairs, adding the *-ing* suffix to each word. Discuss how when the *-ing* suffix changes the word, it either remains a verb or becomes an adjective, depending on how it is used in the sentence. Have student pairs take turns using the new words in oral sentences.
-  **Check for understanding:** Have students turn to page 10 and circle the words with the *-ed* or *-ing* suffix.
- Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [suffixes worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

### Build Fluency

#### Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

### Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have them identify the main idea and supporting details with someone at home.

### **Extend the Reading**

#### Informational Writing and Art Connection

The book mentions that dogs were also trained to find land mines. Have students write a list of as many reasons as they can justify for why a rat might be the better animal for the job. Lead a discussion as students share their responses with the class.

Visit [WritingA-Z.com](http://WritingA-Z.com) for a lesson and leveled materials on informational writing.

#### Social Studies Connection

Provide print and Internet resources about other animals who are specially trained to do work. Have students research with a partner and gather such information as: What are the animals trained to do? How are they trained? How does the animal's job help others? Why is the animal good at its job? After students report their findings, have a class discussion about how the animals and their jobs and training are alike and different.

#### Skill Review

**Discussion cards** covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

### **Assessment**

#### Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently ask and answer questions to understand text during discussion and on a worksheet
- accurately identify main idea and details during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly understand and use consonant *r*-blends
- correctly understand and use adjectives during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify and use suffixes during discussion and on a worksheet

#### Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**