

Focus Question:

How is the boomerang central to the story, both literally and figuratively?

Book Summary

Text Type: Realistic/Fiction

Jess is very upset. Not only did he lose his pet bird, but he cannot master the technique of throwing a boomerang, and is having difficulty making friends with some kids at school. *Many Happy Returns* is a realistic fiction book about a boy who is searching for his dove while venting his frustration to an old boomerang-slinger champ. M'Gwump, Jess's Australian grandpa, teaches the young boy a life lesson through his wisdom and hobby of throwing a boomerang. This engaging book encourages students to practice analyzing the plot and identifying similes.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Summarize to understand text
- ☐ Identify the parts of a plot
- ☐ Understand information provided by a glossary
- ☐ Recognize and understand the use of commas to separate dialogue
- ☐ Identify similes

Materials

- ☐ Book: *Many Happy Returns* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Analyze plot, commas to separate dialogue, similes worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

• Words to Know

Story critical: *boomerang* (n.), *desperate* (adj.), *dilemma* (n.), *distract* (v.), *recreation* (n.), *wonderment* (n.)

Enrichment: *avian* (adj.), *enthusiasm* (n.), *knack* (n.), *understatement* (n.)

- **Academic vocabulary:** *adjust* (v.), *believe* (v.), *forever* (adv.), *impossible* (adj.), *return* (v.), *show* (v.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the word *boomerang* on the board. Ask students to share what they know about the object. Explain to students that a boomerang is a curved piece of wood that returns to the thrower after it has been thrown.
- Ask volunteers what skills they think are necessary to use a boomerang and if they think it would be easy to successfully throw one. Have students think about a skill they have and discuss if it was something that came easily to them, and if not, what they needed to do in order to be successful at it. (If students have a hard time thinking of something, give them the ideas of riding a bike, writing, swimming, doing a math problem, and so on.)

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *Many Happy Returns*. 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, 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, illustrator's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Summarize

Explain to students that effective readers pause to think about and summarize what they have read. Point out that one way to understand and remember the story is to stop every couple of pages and create an overview of the most important information from the story. Remind students that a summary includes the main idea and one or two supporting details. Point out that it often answers the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*. Explain to students that they will be pausing after every couple of pages to summarize what they have read.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Analyze plot**

- Explain to students that the *plot* is the series of events in a story. Point out that there are five parts to a plot: *introduction*, *rising action*, *climax*, *falling action*, and *resolution*.
- Review or explain that the five parts of a plot are what make the story interesting to readers. On the board, write the five parts that make up the plot and explain what happens in each: 1. *Introduction*: usually describes the setting and characters; 2. *Rising Action*: introduces the problem and explains how the character plans to solve it; 3. *Climax*: the most exciting part of the text in which the problem is solved; 4. *Falling Action*: tells what happens as a result of the character's solution to the problem; 5. *Resolution*: loose ends are tied up and the story ends. Explain that sometimes the five parts are mixed up within the plot, depending on how the story was written.
- Have students discuss, in groups, the characters and setting of a familiar book or movie. Have them identify the five parts of the plot. Call on volunteers to share their discussion.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the "Words to Know" box on the copyright page. Discuss each word with students. Then, have students turn to the glossary on page 16. Explain that the glossary provides definitions for the vocabulary words in the book. Point out the use of each content word and academic vocabulary word in the book, and then use each word in a different model sentence. Have students work in groups to create posters for these words. Have them include on each poster the word and its part of speech, the definition, the word in an example sentence, and a picture illustrating the meaning of the word.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about how Jess applied what he learned from the boomerang to solve his problem in the story. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *What is a boomerang? How are boomerangs used?* (level 1) multiple pages
- *How does Jess compare his boomerang-throwing skills to his missing bird, Elsie?* (level 2) page 3
- *Why does Jess refer to the boomerang as a "stubborn mule?" How does this relate to his dove?* (level 2) page 6
- *What lesson does Jess learn at the end of the story?* (level 3) page 15
- *How does Jess's practicing help him with Mitts Morgan?* (level 3) pages 13 and 14
- *Why is it important for the boomerang to return when Jess threw it for Mitts?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *What role does M'Gwump play in this story?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *What examples in the book relate M'Gwump's statement, "Things have a way of coming back to you . . .?"* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: **Glossary**

Explain that a glossary defines the words that are in the book. In pairs, have students turn to page 16 and review the glossary. Ask students: *How are the vocabulary words arranged in a glossary? What is the definition of the word avian? What part of speech is the word knack? On what page can you find the word wonderment?* In groups, have students find a word in the book that is not in the glossary. Have them share where it would go in the glossary, name the part of speech, and identify the first page it is found on.

Skill Review

- Explain to students that one way to understand the plot of a story is to summarize the events as they read. Discuss that when they extract the important events from a story it is easier to analyze the different components of a plot.
- Have students work in groups to summarize the details they have read at this point in the story. Have groups discuss the *rising action*.
- Model evaluating details to determine the rising action.
Think-aloud: *After I read page 3, I thought about what Jess's problem was in the story. I read that his pet dove flew away and he tried everything to get her to return. In paragraph 2, Jess says that Elsie will never return to him, just as the boomerang never returns. That statement told me that Jess not only feels as if his bird will never come back, but he feels that he is a failure at boomerang-throwing as well. I know that this is the rising action because Jess introduces his problems in this part of the story. At the bottom of page 3 and continuing on page 4, Jess talks about how he plans on getting his dove to return.*

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

- **Check for understanding:** Call on volunteers to come to the board and write the characters and setting next to the *introduction*. Have them write the problem of the story next to the *rising action*.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce and explain to students the [analyze plot worksheet](#). Have students use the information on the board to fill in the *Introduction* and *Rising Action* information. Have students complete the rest of the worksheet on their own.

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.

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer: **Analyze plot**

Review the analyze plot worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work with a partner. Invite volunteers to share with the class the details they chose. Remind students that identifying the different parts in a plot is an effective way to stay engaged and understand the text.

Comprehension Extension

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided to be used for extension activities.

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Answers will vary. Sample: *With much practice and persistence, the boomerang returns to Jess. Just as the actual boomerang returned, so did Mitts Morgan and the dove. If Jess had not been persistent with the boomerang, his new friendship might have been affected.*)

Comprehension Checks

- [Book quiz](#)
- [Retelling rubric](#)

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics:

Commas to separate dialogue

- Have students turn to page 9 and reread the two paragraphs. Write the following sentence on the board and ask a volunteer to read it aloud: *"It always comes back to you," Jess said with a lack of enthusiasm, "but not to me . . ."* Have students discuss with a partner who is speaking and what words are being spoken.

- Explain that quotation marks are placed before and after the exact words a speaker says and that quotation marks depict dialogue. Circle the commas in the sentence and explain that the first comma is placed before the second quotation mark to separate the speaker's words from the rest of the sentence. Explain that the second comma is placed before the dialogue continues, signifying continuation of the conversation.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students look through the book to locate an example of comma-separated dialogue. Ask them to share the sentence with a partner and explain where the commas are placed and why they are placed there.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [commas-to-separate-dialogue worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: **Similes**

- Review or explain that a *simile* is a comparison that uses the word *like* or *as*. Write the words *like* and *as* on the board. Explain to students that these words are often signals that they are reading a simile.
- Write the following sentences on the board: *His voice is cracking like eggshells. It flopped around like a chicken trying to imitate a sea gull and dropped to the ground.* In pairs, have students discuss what is being compared in each sentence. Call on volunteers to identify the signal words.
- In pairs, have students come up with their own simile. Call on volunteers to share their sentences.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read page 13 with a partner. Ask them to write the simile and circle the signal word (*like an out-of-control helicopter, like*).
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [similes worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.