

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 659

Book Summary

What kind of tree trunk can tell a story? One that's been carved into a totem pole! In this informational book, readers will learn in what parts of the United States totem poles are found, why they are used and by whom, and how totem poles are carved. Photographs of totem poles, and of figures found on totem poles, enhance the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Ask and answer questions to understand informational text
- Identify the main idea and supporting details in nonfiction text
- Identify *r*-controlled vowel *ar*
- Recognize adjectives as words that describe
- Understand and use content vocabulary

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Totem Poles* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Word journal (optional)
- Main idea and details, adjectives, content vocabulary 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.

- Content words:

Story critical: *carver* (n.), *clan* (n.), *crest* (n.), *memorial poles* (n.), *mortuary poles* (n.), *totem poles* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students what they know about totem poles. Create a KWL on the board. Review or explain what each letter stands for. Fill in the first column as students tell things they know about totem poles.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Ask and answer questions

- Explain to students that asking questions about a topic before reading and looking for the answers as they read will help them understand and remember what they read.

- Show students the front and back covers of the book. Ask them to read the title and tell what they think the book will be about. Model how to ask questions using the pictures on the covers. Write the questions on the KWL.

Think aloud: *I see three totem poles on the front cover and two on the back. Two of the totem poles on the front have men at the top that look happy. The two on the back cover look sort of mean. I wonder if different carvings mean different things. I'll write that question on the chart. On the front cover, one of the totem poles is taller than the others. I wonder why. I'll write that question on our chart, too.*

- Have students suggest questions they have about totem poles. Write these in the middle column of the KWL. Explain to them that as they read, they will be looking for answers to the questions.
- Show students the table of contents. Explain or review that the table of contents lists the main ideas about totem poles that are covered in the book. Explain to students they can use the chapter titles to think of other questions about totem poles. Model by adding a question such as *Are totem poles made only from cedar trees?* Add students' questions to the KWL.
- Show students the title page. Talk about the information that is written on the title page (title of book, author's name).
- Show students the remaining illustrations, photographs, and map. Point out the boxes titled "Do You Know?" and explain that these provide additional information about totem poles.
- Show students the glossary and index. Explain the purpose of each.
- As students read, they should use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted reading strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- Go through each page of the book with the students. Talk about the illustrations and use the vocabulary they will encounter in the text. Ask the students to talk about what they see in each picture. Provide opportunities for students to say the new vocabulary words, talk about their meanings, and use the words in sentences.
- Write the following vocabulary words on the board: *mortuary poles*, *memorial poles*.
- Ask students to work with a partner to locate these vocabulary words in the text. Have each partner read aloud the sentence that contains the vocabulary word. Point out to students that these words are written in bold face indicating that they are located in the glossary. Direct student to the glossary and have them read the definitions aloud.
- Give each student a piece of paper and have them fold it in half. On one half direct students to write *mortuary poles* and on the other half *memorial poles*. Have students record the definitions from the glossary under each heading.
- Under the heading *mortuary poles* have students illustrate a totem pole that commemorates a relative, friend, or pet that has died. Under the heading *memorial pole* have students illustrate a totem pole describing a special event in their lives. If time allows, ask students to share their illustrations.
- Encourage students to add the new vocabulary words to their word journals.


Set the Purpose

- Have students read the book to find facts and details that will answer their questions about totem poles.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Give students their copy of the book and direct them to read to the end of page 9. Have students underline answers to any of the questions that are written on the KWL. Encourage students to reread the pages if they finish before everyone else.

- Model answering a question on the KWL.
Think aloud: I'll circle the first question on our KWL and write the answer because I found what I wanted to know. I read that totem poles are carved in different styles for different reasons. I didn't find the answer to the second question, but I think I can figure it out. I wanted to know why one totem pole was bigger than the others. I think it might be because the tree it was carved from was bigger. Or it might be because a story is told on it, and it seems like it would take more room to carve a story. I'm not going to circle the question yet. I want to keep reading to find out if my prediction is correct.
 - Review the remaining questions on the KWL, circling and writing the answers as students provide the information.
 - Ask students if they had other questions as they read the pages. Add them to the KWL on the board.
 - Encourage students to read the remainder of the story, looking for information that will answer the questions written on the board.
-  Have students make a 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

- **Word attack:** Ask the students what words were difficult for them. Ask how they figured out the words. Reinforce any strategies used, such as sounding out the word and verifying by context and/or picture clues. For example, have students look at the last sentence on page 5. Ask how they know the bold word is *clan*. Ask what sound is at the beginning of the word, and what sound it ends with. Ask what words are around, before, or after the unfamiliar word that give them a clue about the word and its meaning.
- **Comprehension:** Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading keeps them interested in the topic, encourages them to keep reading to find the answers to their questions, and helps them understand and remember what they have read.
- Discuss additional strategies students used to gain meaning from the book.

Teach the Comprehension Skill: **Main idea and details**


- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain that many books are about one thing or main idea. Ask students what the book they just read is about (totem poles). Ask students if they think the title and covers of this book were good hints. Ask students to tell the best way to find out if the title and covers are good hints (read the book).
- Direct the students to the table of contents. Explain that each chapter in this book tells facts and details about totem poles. Have students look at the first chapter title. Explain that this chapter told them facts and details about totem poles and what they are made from. Have students turn to page 5. Encourage them to find four things the carvings on the totem poles can tell. Explain that these are as follows: to describe someone's life, to describe a special event, to tell the history of a family, to welcome visitors. Explain that finding facts and details in a book helps them understand what the book is about.
- **Check for understanding:** Direct the students to page 6 in the book. Have them find three places totem poles can be found on a house (doorways, corners, and poles that support the roof). Then have them find the detail that tells what totem poles on a house mean (show wealth and status). Discuss the concept of "status" (the position or rank of a person compared to other people).
- **Independent practice:** Explain the [main-idea-and-details worksheet](#). Have students complete the worksheet. If time allows, discuss their responses.

-  **Extend the discussion:** Have students use the inside cover of their book to write three facts and details they learned about totem poles.

Build Skills

Phonics: **R-controlled vowel ar**

- Write the word *carver* on the board and say it aloud with students. Explain to students that the /ar/ sound in the word is created when the letters *a* and *r* are combined. Explain that when a vowel is followed by the consonant *r* it affects the sound the vowel usually stands for.
- Write the following words on the board: *target, barber, garlic, artist*. Read each word aloud with students one at a time. As you read each word run your finger under the letters of the word as students say the whole word aloud.
- Write the following words on the board, omitting the *r*-controlled vowel *ar*: *carton, cellar, market, harvest, pardon, solar*. Ask volunteers to come to the board and write in the *r*-controlled vowel *ar*. Read each word aloud as a class.

-  **Check for understanding:** Have students to turn to page 6. Ask students to reread page 6 and circle any words containing the *r*-controlled vowel *ar*. Have students share their findings with the class. Repeat this process on page 11.

Grammar and Mechanics: **Adjectives**

- Direct students to the description of Bear on page 10. Read the phrase and ask students to tell what kind of ears Bear has. Have them circle *round*. Review or explain that this is a describing word; it tells what Bear's ears look like. Explain to students that words that describe are called *adjectives*. Adjectives tell *what kind, how many, or which one*. Have them find the adjective that tells the number of teeth Bear has (*many*).
- Have students look at the description for Beaver. Explain that *long* describes *front teeth*. Ask them to find the adjective that describes Beaver's tail (*flat*).
- **Check for understanding:** Have students look at the descriptions for the other common figures on pages 10 and 11. Ask them to circle the adjectives that describe the main feature of each. Discuss their responses.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [adjectives worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss answers aloud after they are finished.

Word Work: **Content vocabulary**

- Explain to students that the many of words they read in the book are used to tell about totem poles. Provide opportunities for the students to talk about difficult words such as *memorial poles, mortuary pole, or clan*. Provide opportunities for the students to say the new vocabulary words, talk about their meanings, and use the words in sentences.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [content vocabulary worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss answers aloud after they are finished.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow the students to read their book independently or with a partner. Partners can take turns reading parts of the book.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends.

Extend the Reading

Writing Connection

Have students use the legend on pages 8 and 9, and two or three of the figures on pages 10 and 11 to write a story that could be told on a totem pole. Provide oatmeal containers (or other round containers) for students to create totem poles that tell their written stories. Have students share their stories and totem poles with the group. Display the stories and totem poles and invite other classes to view them.

Visit [Writing A–Z](#) for a lesson and leveled materials on informational writing.

Social Studies Connection

Provide print and Internet resources for students to research the Tlingit tribe or other groups that carve totem poles. Have them find where the Tlingit live, and how and why they continue to carve totem poles today. Have a round table discussion of what students learned.

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.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand nonfiction text
- correctly identify the main idea and details in nonfiction text and on a worksheet
- correctly identify and use *r*-controlled vowel *ar*
- correctly identify and use adjectives in text and on a worksheet
- correctly understand and use content vocabulary during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)