



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 1,103

Book Summary

When the United States government needed a secret code to transmit messages during World War II, they chose a language that people from no other country would understand: Navajo. *Code Talkers* highlights the man who first proposed using the Navajo language, how the military developed the code, and the Navajo soldiers who bravely volunteered to serve their country. Photographs, maps, and charts support the text.

Book and lesson are also available for Levels P and V.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Ask and answer questions to understand text
- Discern problems and corresponding solutions
- Identify names of people as proper nouns
- Place words in alphabetical order

Materials

Green text indicates resources that are available on the website.

- Book—*Code Talkers* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- Coded puzzles
- Sheets of paper
- Problem and solution, proper nouns: names of people, alphabetical order worksheets
- Discussion cards



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

Vocabulary

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

Content words:

Story critical: **breaking** (v.), **code talkers** (n.), **cryptographic** (adj.), **discrimination** (n.), **Navajo** (n.), **reservation** (n.)

Enrichment: **casualties** (n.), **recipient** (n.), **serve** (v.), **slang** (n.), **translation** (n.), **transmit** (v.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Assign students to groups, and pass out coded puzzles to each group. Have groups work on solving each of the problems.
- Provide hints for the solutions as necessary. Invite groups to share with the rest of the class the solution and the strategies used to solve each puzzle. Guide students to the solution for any puzzle that remains unsolved by all groups.

- Explain to students that the book they will read describes a special code, one created using the Navajo language. Discuss with students what they already know about the Navajo people and their language. Invite volunteers to come to the board and record details from their prior knowledge.

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, 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**

- Review with students that engaged readers help themselves to understand what they are reading by asking questions before and during reading, and searching for answers as they read. Discuss with students how asking questions will help them to understand and remember what they read.
- Point out that they will generate questions on the basis of information they read in the book and what they already know about the topic.
- Model how to ask questions.
Think-aloud: Even before reading, I have questions I want the book to answer. On the cover, I see two soldiers in what appears to be a jungle, and one is wearing a headset. The title of the book is Code Talkers. This information prompts my curiosity. What are these soldiers doing? Is this photograph from a war, and which one? What does a code have to do with a war? As I read, I will look for answers to these questions.
- Record the questions from the think-aloud on the board. Have students share with a partner how you used details from the text to create the questions.
- Direct students to the table of contents. Have students read the section titles with a partner, discuss the details suggested by the table of contents, and generate questions on the basis of this information. Invite volunteers to share questions with the rest of the class, and record them on the board.
- Remind students to generate new questions as they read and to search for the answers in the book.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Problem and solution**

- Review or explain to students that stories need certain elements to be complete: setting, characters, problem, and solution. Write the words *problem* and *solution* on the board. Review or explain that a problem is a difficulty or puzzle confronting people, and the solution is the action taken to resolve the issue.
- Explain to students that stories contain problems and solutions because everyday life is full of problems and solutions. Point out that some nonfiction books describe problems real people faced and the actions they took to solve them.
- In between the words *problem* and *solution*, write the headings *possible solutions* and *consequences*. Write the following sentence on the board beneath the *problem* heading: *I want to see a new movie in the theaters, but I don't have enough money.* Read it aloud with students.
- Model determining possible solutions.
Think-aloud: When problems arise in my life, I can respond to them in different ways. For instance, if I wanted to see a new movie, but I didn't have enough money, I would think about different actions that could solve this problem. I could work to earn the money, with chores or a job. This solution has the consequence of hard work, but the money I make is mine. I could also ask to borrow money from someone else. If I chose this option, I would get the money easily, but then I would need to figure out a way to pay the person back, and that burden would still be on me. Another possible solution would be to wait until the movie arrived at the cheap theaters,

where the tickets cost less. This solution would help me use the little bit of money I already had, but on the other hand I would have to wait a long time to see the movie. After considering my options, I would then choose which solution worked the best for me, on the basis of which solution had the best consequences, and use it to solve my problem.

- Write the possible solutions and their consequences from the think-aloud beneath the appropriate headings, *possible solutions* and *consequences*. Have students discuss with a partner which solution they would choose to follow and the consequences that would follow. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.
- Point out to students that the consequences of a solution can be good, bad, and most often a combination of both.
- Erase the information from the board. Write a new sentence beneath the *problem* heading, and read it aloud with students: *I accidentally broke one of my mom's dishes*. Have students work in groups to determine two possible solutions for this problem and the consequences that would follow from each choice. Call on groups to share one solution with the rest of the class, and record it beneath the *possible solutions* heading.
- Discuss with students the consequences that would ensue from each solution. Encourage students to consider whether each solution has positive and negative results. Have students share with a partner which solution they would pursue, and ask them to explain their reasoning.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- While previewing the book, reinforce the vocabulary words students will encounter. For example, while looking at the picture on page 6, you might say: *Look at the map. Where do the Navajo people currently live? The Navajo currently live in the southwestern United States.*
- Remind students of the strategies they can use to sound out words they don't know. For example, they can use what they know about letter and sound correspondence to figure out the word. They can look for words within words, and for prefixes and suffixes.
- Introduce the story-critical vocabulary words and write them on the board. Read them aloud with students.
- Break students into groups and have them determine the meaning of each word using the context of the surrounding pages. Then, have student groups check their definitions against those in the glossary.
- Have students fold a separate sheet of paper in half. Ask students to write the word *breaking* on one half of the paper and draw a picture representing the word on the other half. Have students repeat the process with the remaining words.
- Have students turn their pictures over and write a sentence that accurately uses the corresponding vocabulary words. Have students share their pictures and sentences with a partner. Invite volunteers to share a sentence with the rest of the class, and confirm that they used the vocabulary word accurately.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about the Navajo code talkers. Encourage students 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 7. Encourage those who finish early to go back and reread.
- **Model asking and answering questions.**

Think-aloud: Before I started reading, I had several questions I wanted answered. I was curious about whether the book was connected to a war, and which one. I learned on page 5 that this book was relating information about World War II. I also wanted to know what a code had to do with war. The first portion of the book also answered that question. I discovered that the

military sent coded messages between groups of soldiers for various reasons. The last question I asked before reading was what the soldiers on the cover were doing. So far the book has not answered that question. I will continue to look for its answer as I read. I will also look for the answers to the new questions I generated while reading. Will a code based on the Navajo language work? What are some examples of modern coding systems?

- Write the answers from the think-aloud beneath their corresponding questions on the board. Add new questions to the board.
- Review with students the remaining questions on the board and have students point to those that were answered by information in the book. Invite volunteers to share with the rest of the class answers to those questions, and have other students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree.
- Have students share with a partner new questions that occurred to them as they read, and ask them to write the questions on a separate sheet of paper. Call on students to share a question with the rest of the class, and record new questions on the board.
- Review with students the problems and solutions discussed earlier. Erase any prior information from the board. Have students work with a partner to discuss the problem facing the American military (*the enemy was breaking all of their coded messages*). Call on students to share their idea of the problem with the rest of the class, and guide students to a consensus. Write the problem on the board.
- Have students work in their groups to discuss possible solutions to this problem. Invite volunteers to share a solution with the rest of the class. Record these beneath the *possible solutions* heading on the board.
- Ask students to discuss with a partner the consequences that would ensue from each solution. Encourage students to consider good and bad consequences. Invite volunteers to share their ideas with the rest of the class, and record them under the *consequences* heading beside the appropriate solution.
- Ask students to point to the solution they would choose, and invite volunteers to explain their reasoning. Remind students that people want to choose the solution that has the best consequences.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 8 through 11. Have students share with a partner new questions they asked while reading this section. Have them write their questions on their separate sheet of paper. Invite volunteers to share new questions with the rest of the class, and add them to the board.
- Have students work with a partner to determine the solution the military pursued to solve their problem. Call on students to share their thoughts with the rest of the class, and guide students to a consensus on the solution presented in the book (*the United States decided to make a new code based on the Navajo language*).
- Explain to students that solutions can be simple or complicated. Point out that a complex problem often needs a complicated solution. Have students call out whether they think the solution described in the book was *simple* or *complicated*. Have students discuss with a partner the steps the military had to take to develop the new code.
- Point out that although the military decided on a course of action, readers still don't know whether it worked. Explain to students that sometimes we try to solve a problem, but our method doesn't work. Have students nod their head if they know whether the Navajo code actually solved the problem and shake their head if they still don't know. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.
- Have students discuss in groups what to do if the solution to their problem doesn't work, and invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to look for answers to their questions as they read. Have students examine the remainder of the details to see whether the Navajo code actually solved the American military's problem.



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

- Have students write on their separate sheet of paper the final questions they thought of as they read the last part of the book. Ask students to discuss the answers to their questions with their partner.
- **Think-aloud:** *I was curious about what the soldiers were doing on the cover, and the first part of the book didn't provide that information. After reading further, I learned the soldiers were using a radio to send coded orders. The book also answered the other questions I asked while reading. I wondered whether a code based on the Navajo language would work, and the book showed me that not only did it work, it is the only spoken military code that has never been broken. I also wanted to learn some examples of modern coding. The book described two types of secret codes, the swapping method and the scrambling method. This seems like a big topic, though, so I know I could research it in other resources to learn more. Searching for answers to all my questions increased my interest in the book and helped me remember what I read.*
- Record your answers on the board beneath their corresponding questions. Review with students the remaining unanswered questions on the board, and have students point to those that were answered.
- Have students work with a partner to discuss how the book answered these questions. Then, call on students to share answers with the rest of the class, and record them on the board beneath their corresponding questions.
- Invite volunteers to come to the board and circle unanswered questions. Point out to students that books may not answer every question a reader asks. Discuss with students resources they could use to find answers outside the book, such as encyclopedias, other nonfiction books, and the Internet.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Review with students the problem and solution from the book. Remind them that problems can have multiple solutions, and they still didn't know whether the chosen solution would work by the midpoint of the book. Have students nod their head if the solution worked and shake their head if it did not. Discuss with students the consequences of the solution to use Navajo as the basis for a new code.
- Have students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree the solution was a good choice and a thumbs-down if they would have chosen a different option. Invite volunteers to share their reasoning with the rest of the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [problem-and-solution worksheet](#). Have students compare their work with a partner's. If time allows, have them share what they wrote with the rest of the class.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about the Navajo code and the code talkers that transmitted it. Why are codes so important during wartime? Were the Navajo people heroes in the war? Why?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Proper nouns: Names of people

- Remind students that a common noun identifies a person, place, or thing. Have students draw pictures of three nouns. Invite volunteers to share their pictures with the rest of the class, and ask the other students to identify them. Write the nouns on the board.
- Review with students that a *proper noun* is the name of a *specific person, place, or thing*. Remind them that proper nouns are always capitalized.
- Refer to the nouns on the board. Ask students to discuss with a partner specific examples of each of those nouns. Call on students to share a proper noun with the rest of the class, and have the rest of the class point to its corresponding common noun.
- Write on the board the proper nouns that are names of people, without using capitals. Invite volunteers to come to the board and add capital letters to each word.
- Remind students that the name of a person or a group of people refers to a specific person and is therefore a proper noun.
- Direct students to turn to page 9. Ask them to work with a partner to locate and underline all the nouns on the page. Then, have them circle all the proper nouns that name people.
- Write the word *Navajo* on the board. Have students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree the word is a proper noun. Invite a volunteer to explain to the rest of the class how he or she knows. Ask students to call out whether the word refers to one specific person or not.
- Explain to students that specific groups of people are also proper nouns. Have students share with a partner reasons why names of groups are proper nouns. Have students work in groups to brainstorm to generate other examples of groups of people, such as nationalities, clubs, business, and so on. Invite volunteers to share examples with the rest of the class, and record a list on the board.
- **Check for understanding:** Write a series of nouns on the board, both common and proper. Have students work with a partner to identify the proper nouns. Invite volunteers to come to the board and circle them. Then, have students point to all the proper nouns that are names of groups of people, and invite volunteers to draw a star beside each of the group names. Have students choose two group nouns to use in oral sentences created with a partner.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [proper-nouns-names-of-people worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud.

Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Review the process of putting a list of words in alphabetical order. Remind students to begin by comparing the first letter of each word and determining which letter comes first in the alphabet.
- Write the words *serve* and *code* on the board. Have students identify which word comes first in alphabetical order and think about why. Call on a student to identify the word that comes first and explain her or his reasoning. Invite a volunteer to write the two words in a list on the board, leaving plenty of space between them.
- Add the word *Japan* to the board, and have students work with a partner to compare the word to both *serve* and *code*. Point out that they must know the alphabetical position of *Japan* in relation to both words in the existing list in order to place it properly. Invite a volunteer to share where it belongs in the list and why (in the middle, because the letter *Jj* comes after the letter *Cc* but before the letter *Ss*).
- Write the word *states* on the board, and ask students to compare it to the word *serve*. Remind students that when words begin with the same letter, they then compare the second letter in each word. Have students point to the word that comes first in alphabetical order. Invite a volunteer to explain why.

- Ask students to work with a partner to compare the word *states* to other words in the list and determine where it belongs. Invite a volunteer to come to the board and add the words *Japan* and *serve* to the list in their proper places. Have other students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree with the placements.
- Write the compound word *code talkers* on the board. Ask students to compare this word with the word *code*. Have students discuss with a partner how they would alphabetize the two words. Explain to students that when alphabetizing a word and a compound word or phrase that starts with the same word, the single word comes first in alphabetical order, and the extended phrase comes second. Point out that *code* therefore belongs before *code talkers* in alphabetical order. Add *code talkers* to the list on the board.
- Add the phrase *code system* to the board. Have students work with a partner to determine where the word belongs in the list on the board. Ask students to point to its proper spot in the list, and invite a volunteer to explain its alphabetical position to the rest of the class. Ask a student to come to the board and add the phrase *code system* to the list.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following words on the board: *Navajo*, *break*, *war*, *Navajo language*, *hard*, and *bear*. Have students read the words aloud. Ask students to work with a partner to write the words in a list of alphabetical order. Invite volunteers to read their list aloud, and have other students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree the list is correctly alphabetized.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [alphabetical order worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud.

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 students demonstrate to someone at home how a reader asks questions then reflects on the answers while reading.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing Connection

Review with students the two different ways to encode messages presented in the book. Have students choose one method and create a code. Have them write an encoded sentence about an activity or event at school. Invite student pairs to share their code with their partner, present their encoded message, and have their partner decode it.

Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on informational writing.

Social Studies Connection

Review with students the details they learned about the Navajo from the book. Create a KWL chart on the board, and have students provide details to fill in the *K* column of the chart. Ask students to create their own KWL chart on a separate sheet of paper. Discuss with students the Navajo people, referring to maps, photographs, art, paintings, and any other accessible artifacts. Read from nonfiction books or picture books that describe the history and the culture of this Native American nation. Assign students to groups, and have them research a particular aspect of the Navajo. Topics could include religion, family structure, food, holidays, and so on. Ask students to record on their personal KWL chart details they learn about the Navajo. Have students create a poster depicting the information they learned and present their poster to the class. Have students add more details to their KWL chart from information they learn during presentations. Ask students to help you fill in the *L* column of the KWL chart on the board. Have students share with a partner what they still want to learn, record this information in the *W* column of their personal KWL chart, and invite volunteers to share details with the rest of the class. Record this information in the *W* column of the chart on the board.

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 strategy of asking and answering questions to comprehend the text during discussion;
- accurately discern problem-and-solution relationships in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet;
- correctly identify and use names of people as proper nouns during discussion and on a worksheet;
- properly place words in alphabetical order during discussion and on a worksheet.

Comprehension Checks

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