

About the Book

Text Type: Fiction/Pourquoi Tale Page Count: 24 Word Count: 1,597

Book Summary

How the Robin Stole Fire is a retelling of an Australian Aboriginal pourquoi tale. The story begins when a travel-weary old man shares the secret of fire with a group of hunter birds. The birds then set out to steal the fire from the cockatoo who hoards it. The tale explains both the origins of useful fire and the brush fires that periodically sweep the grasslands of the Australian outback. Whimsical illustrations support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Retell

Objectives

- Retell while reading to understand text
- Identify characters, setting, and plot
- Identify and use quotation marks
- Understand and use content vocabulary

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*How the Robin Stole Fire* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Sheet of paper for each student
- Story elements, quotation marks, 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: *corroboree* (n.), *enraged* (adj.), *feat* (n.), *ingenuity* (n.), *journey* (n.), *journeyed* (v.)

Enrichment: *ancient* (adj.), *bushes* (n.), *cockatoo* (n.), *culture* (n.), *elders* (n.), *kookaburra* (n.), *refreshed* (adj.), *robin* (n.), *traditions* (n.), *wren* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Have students tell where they think fire came from and who they think were the first people to use it.
- Explain to students that this story is an Australian Aboriginal pourquoi tale. Explain to students that pourquoi tales are a kind of folktale that explain how something originated, or came to be. Explain that there are pourquoi tales that explain how the world came to be or how certain animals got certain physical features.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copies of the book and read the title together. Point out the information along the bottom of the cover page, and ask students if they know why it reads “retold.” Remind them that folktales are stories that were originally told orally and that have been handed down for many generations.
- Ask students what they know about folktales and what they think might happen in this story based on what they know.
- Have students look at the title page. Ask them to use the cover and title page pictures to predict what they think the book might be about.
- Make connections to the Build Background discussion by having students predict when this story might have taken place.
- Have students preview the pictures in the book to predict what might happen in the story.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Retell**

- Reinforce how pausing to retell or summarize events in a story as students are reading is a strategy that good readers use to help them make sense of what is happening in a story.
- **Think-aloud:** *Whenever I read a story, I always pause after several pages to review in my mind who the main characters are, what the problem is, and what has happened so far. This helps me keep track of everything, and it also helps me figure out what is happening. Good readers always do this when they read.*
- As students read, they should use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary


- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work 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, prefixes, and suffixes. They can use the context to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Direct students to the first sentence on page 21. Have them find the word *enraged*. Model how they can use context clues to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Explain that the previous page describes how angry Mar was feeling. The sentence containing the unfamiliar word says that Mar was still *enraged* when he told Quartang that he would kill him. The last paragraph of this page describes how Mar and Quartang fought. Say: *As I read this page I discover that Mar is threatening to kill Quartang and then fights him so I know that Mar must be very angry. On the basis of the clues on this page, I think the word enraged must mean very angry or furious.* Invite students to follow along as you reread the first sentence to confirm the meaning of the word.
- Remind students that they should check whether a word makes sense by rereading the sentence.

Set the Purpose

- As they read, have students think about the characters and the events of the story so they can retell it.


During Reading

Student Reading

-  **Guide the reading:** Have students read to page 10. Encourage them to underline the words or phrases in the book that tell the names of the characters, where the story takes place, and any major events. If they finish before everyone else, they can go back and reread.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

How the Robin Stole Fire

- Have students tell the events they underlined. Write the first event on the board: *A group of hunter birds met an old man.* Ask individual students to come to the board and write the remaining events in order. Help students understand which events are important and which are not. For example, on page 4, the old man *stuck his spear into the ground as a sign of peace.* Explain that while this is an interesting detail, it doesn't matter to the sequence of events; the old man did not have to do this.
- Use the list generated above to model retelling a story.
Think-aloud: *I read that the hunter birds met an old man. The old man said he would tell them the secret of fire if he could rest with them for a while. After eating and resting, the old man told the birds the secret of fire and how they could steal fire.*
- As students read the remainder of the book, have them think about the characters and look for the major events in the story.
-  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 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

- Discuss how identifying the characters and thinking about what happens in the story keeps them actively involved in the reading process and helps them remember what they've read so they can tell the story to someone else.

Teach the Comprehension Skill: **Story elements: Identify characters, setting, and plot**

- **Discussion:** Ask students when they think the story took place. Have them identify the characters in the story (the old man and the individual birds) and discuss the problem the characters faced (they didn't have fire) and their solution (they decided to steal fire).
- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain that most fiction, or made-up stories, including *pourquoi* tales, usually has four main parts: the *setting*, or where and when the story takes place; the *characters*, or who is in the story; a *problem*, or an issue that arises in the story; and a *solution*, or how the issue is resolved. Write the words *setting*, *characters*, *problem*, and *solution* on the board, along with the explanatory words for each.
- Explain to students that many writers tell where and when the story takes place in the first paragraph, but that in some stories they will have to read further to find out. Explain that the characters in a story are the people or animals that are in it, and that some may be more important than others. Explain that these are called the *main characters*. Explain that a writer usually poses a problem to a character, and the rest of the story evolves around solving the problem.
- Give students a moment to look at the story elements on the board, and tell them that you're going to ask them to explain the meanings of the terms to a classmate. Erase the words. Write the word *setting* on the board. Have students tell the person sitting next to them what the word means. Repeat for the remaining elements.
- **Check for understanding:** Ask students to think about the story they've just read. Have them use a piece of paper to record each of the story elements. Have students identify the setting. If they have difficulty with the time aspect of the setting, explain that it is not always easy to tell when made-up stories take place. Guide them to look for clues. For example, a story in which someone is riding a bike is probably happening now. A story in which robots run the world probably is taking place in the future, and a story in which the characters ride on horses instead of cars may have taken place in the past or long ago. Provide story examples if needed.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **story elements worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their responses.

-  Instruct students to use the last page of the book to write whether or not they think it was right for Tatkanna to steal the fire from Mar and to explain why or why not.

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Quotation marks

- Write the following sentence on the board: *"Let me have him," Mar said.* Read the sentence and ask students who is speaking and what he is saying. Circle the quotation marks and explain that these are placed before and after the words a speaker says. Point out the comma and explain that it is placed inside the second quotation marks.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Mar said, "Let me have him."* Have students explain how this sentence is different from the other one on the board. Point out that the quotation marks are still around the speaker's words but that the comma is placed before the words, and a period is placed inside the quotation marks.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following sentences on the board. Have individual students come to the board to place the quotation marks in each sentence.
I am very tired, said Prite.
Mar yelled, No one but me can have fire!
I have traveled far, the old man said.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [quotation marks worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Word Work: Content vocabulary

- Provide opportunities for students to say the new vocabulary words, talk about their meanings, and use the words in sentences. Remind students to use context clues to help them figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
- Explain to students that many of the new vocabulary words they read in the book are used to tell about birds. Provide opportunities to talk about difficult words or concepts such as *cockatoo* and *kookaburras*.
- **Check for understanding:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [content vocabulary worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Invite students to read their book independently. Additionally, invite partners to 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.

Extend the Reading

Writing Connection

Have students work in small groups to write an *pourquoi* tale. Have them write a story in which one of the characters is a wise old person in a tribe who lives in the "dreamtime." Their story should tell about what happens when the tribe moves from the desert to the coast in search of food and notices that, in this new land, the ocean waters rise and fall each day. The tribal elder in the story must explain the tide to his people. Ask students to think about how they would explain the tide to people who have never seen the ocean. Have students illustrate and share their stories.

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

Social Studies Connection

Provide resources for students to research Australian birds. Have them identify the birds illustrated in the story. Ask students to present the information on a poster. They may draw, trace, or paste pictures of the birds and write a brief description of each. Display on a bulletin board titled *Birds from Down Under*.

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 pause as they are reading to retell main events in their mind
- accurately understand and identify the story elements of setting, characters, and sequence in discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify a speaker's words and use quotation marks in text and on a worksheet
- consistently understand and use content vocabulary during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

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