

Focus Question:

What are the challenges and rewards of hiking the Appalachian Trail?

Book Summary

Text Type: Nonfiction/Personal Narrative

Can you imagine hiking a trail that is two thousand miles long and goes through fourteen U.S. states? That's exactly what Ben did! In *Hiking the Appalachian Trail*, students will read about the experience of Ben Gaddes, who hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2016. Engaging photographs and an interesting topic will capture students' interest. The book can also be used to teach students how to make inferences and draw conclusions as well as to summarize to better understand the text. The book and lesson are also available for levels R and U.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Summarize to understand text
- ☐ Make inferences and draw conclusions using clues found in the text
- ☐ Understand the importance of photographs to enhance the text
- ☐ Recognize and use past-tense verbs in sentences
- ☐ Place words in alphabetical order

Materials

- ☐ Book: *Hiking the Appalachian Trail* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Summarize, past-tense verbs, alphabetical order 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: *acclimate* (v.), *footpath* (n.), *insurmountable* (adj.), *summited* (v.), *thru-hiking* (n.), *traversed* (v.)

Enrichment: *hygiene* (n.), *hypothermia* (n.), *lean-to* (n.), *solitude* (n.), *subsist* (v.), *terrain* (n.)

- **Academic vocabulary:** *challenge* (n.), *community* (n.), *entire* (adj.), *prepare* (v.), *recover* (v.), *several* (adj.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Place on the board the photograph from page 8 of the book. Ask students what activity might require all of those items. Guide them to the conclusion that all of those items can be used for hiking and camping. Ask students to share any experiences they've had with hiking or camping.
- Show students a map of the United States. Point out Georgia and Maine. Ask students how someone could travel from Georgia to Maine (*by car, by train, by airplane*). Now share that many people actually walk from Georgia to Maine by following the Appalachian Trail. Explain that today's book will explain one man's experience of thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *Hiking the Appalachian Trail*. 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: Summarize

Explain to students that engaged readers recall, talk about, and write about what they've read by using the information from the text to create a summary. Explain that a *summary* is a brief overview of the most important information in the text. Point out that a summary answers the questions *who, what, when, where, and why*. Explain to students that creating a summary after they read helps them better remember and understand the most important parts of the text. Using a book the class has previously read, model how to create a summary that answers the questions *who, what, when, where, and why*.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Make inferences / draw conclusions

- Explain to students that authors don't always use details to explain everything that happens in a book. Discuss how sometimes they give readers clues to figure out what they didn't tell in words and then readers use those clues from the text and what they already know to make a guess. Point out that this is called *making an inference* or *drawing a conclusion*.
- Draw a three-column chart on the board. Label the columns: *Evidence from Text*, *What I Know*, *What I Infer / Conclude*. Explain to students that they will be using clues from the text as well as what they already know to make inferences and draw conclusions while they are reading.

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 one man's experience of thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail. 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.

- *Why did Ben decide it was time to hike the Appalachian Trail?* (level 1) page 4
- *Why do many people refer to the Appalachian Trail as the "Green Tunnel?"* (level 1) page 6
- *What types of foods did Ben eat while on the trail and why?* (level 2) page 10
- *What did Ben do when he encountered animals? Why was this so crucial to his safety?* (level 3) page 11

- *What would have happened if Ben had gotten sick while on the trail?* (level 3) page 12
- *Was hiking the Appalachian Trail worth it for Ben?* (level 2) pages 14–15
- *Why did Ben write this book, and what does he want others to know about his experience?* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Photographs

Explain to students that photographs, or pictures taken with a camera, help readers clarify information in a text. Give students sticky notes or index cards, and ask them to cover each photograph in the book. Then have students reread the book with a partner. Ask students: *How was the book different when you read it without the photographs? What value do the photographs add to the text? Why did the author include the photographs that he did?* Guide students to the conclusion that photographs are an important part of understanding the author's message of a text and they help clarify and enhance the reader's understanding of the information provided in the words.

Skill Review

- Model for students how to orally summarize by stopping at several points during the reading. In your summaries, be sure to answer the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*.
- After students have finished the book, model how to complete the [summarize worksheet](#). Have students fill out the sections and use this information to create a short summary of the book.
- Model making inferences and drawing conclusions. **Think-aloud:** *I know that authors don't always use details to explain everything that happens in a book. I know I can use clues from the pictures and words to make inferences and draw conclusions. On page 11, I read I learned that properly resting and resupplying were just as important as hiking. With this information and what I know about the basics of staying healthy, I can infer that resting and resupplying helped Ben stay healthy, which allowed him to complete the Appalachian Trail. If he hadn't, he might not have completed his dream. Using clues from the book and what I already know helps me make inferences and draw conclusions about what I'm reading.*
- Add this example inference to the three-column cart on the board. Place students into small groups and ask them to create inferences based on the following text evidence: *most thru-hikers begin in spring and hike north, as I did, since it's already warm down south* (page 6); *interesting people of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and abilities choose to hike the A.T. each year* (page 9); *I filtered all my water and was cautious about hygiene to avoid getting sick* (page 12). Fill in these examples on the board, and invite volunteers to fill in the

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

What I Know and *What I Infer / Conclude* sections for each example. Discuss with students how making inferences and drawing conclusions helps them better understand the text.

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: Summarize

Review the summarize worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work in groups. Invite volunteers to share their summaries with the rest of the class. Ask students to share how creating a summary of the text helped them better understand and remember the information presented.

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: *Some of the challenges of hiking the Appalachian Trail include the following: it takes a long time; it takes money; it's mentally challenging; it's hard on your body; it requires a lot of supplies; and so on. Some of the rewards include proving to yourself you can accomplish your goals, meeting new people, seeing beautiful scenery, and so on.*)

Comprehension Checks

- **Book quiz**
- **Retelling rubric**

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Past-tense verbs

- Read the following sentence aloud with students: *I decided it was time to fulfill a childhood dream and hike the entire length of the Appalachian Trail.* Remind students that *verbs* are *action words*. Have students identify the first verb in the sentence, and write *decided* on the board.
- Review or explain that when we describe something that happened in the past, we use the past-tense form of the verb. Point out that, typically, we add the letters *-ed* to create a past-tense verb, like in the example above (*decided*).

- Create a two-column chart on the board, and label the two columns: *Present-Tense Verb* and *Past-Tense Verb*. Have students recreate this chart on their own paper. Then have students reread pages 4 through 6 and circle all the verbs. Have them record the past-tense verbs in the *Past-Tense Verb* column and the present-tense verbs in the *Present-Tense Verb* column. Have volunteers share their answers, and record their answers on the board.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work with a partner to create a list of ten action verbs, including both the present- and past-tense form for each. Have students create sentences for these words, and invite volunteers to share their sentences with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **past-tense-verbs worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Write the words *solitude*, *summitted*, and *subsist* on the board. Point out that the words begin with the same letter. Model how to list these words in alphabetical order. Review the process of putting a list of words in alphabetical order.
- Write the words *recover*, *acclimate*, and *adventure* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order and why.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the words *hypothermia*, *hygiene*, *insurmountable*, *traversed*, and *thru-hiking* on the board. Have students write the words in alphabetical order and explain their thinking on a separate piece of paper. Discuss their answers with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **alphabetical order worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

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