

About the Book

Text Type: Fiction/Mystery Page Count: 26 Word Count: 3,127

Book Summary

While on a field trip to the Anasazi ruins in Colorado, Stanley DeCapers is determined to solve the mystery of the vanishing Anasazi. With a friend's help, he manages to slip away from the group and strike out on his own to search for clues. He meets a mysterious man who tells him that the Anasazi left their cliff dwellings to move to another place. When Stanley asks why they moved, the man tells him "there are some mysteries the sky will never reveal."

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Make, revise, and confirm predictions

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of making, revising, and confirming predictions
- Understand and identify story elements of characters, setting, plot, and theme
- Understand and identify coordinate and cumulative adjectives
- Identify and use homophones

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*The Case of the Vanishing Anasazi* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Dictionaries
- Four sheets of poster paper
- Two colored pencils per student
- Story elements: identify characters, setting, plot, and theme, homophones 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: *kiva* (n.), *mesas* (n.), *petroglyphs* (n.), *ruins* (n.), *sipapu* (n.), *summon* (v.)

Enrichment: *ancestors* (n.), *camouflaging* (v.), *descendants* (n.), *disapproving* (adj.), *disintegrated* (v.), *drought* (n.), *Native Americans* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students to tell why they think a whole group of people, such as a small town, might disappear.
- Have students tell what they know about the civilization of the Anasazi. Show students on a map where these Native Americans once lived. Explain that the Anasazi disappeared from the area, leaving behind their homes and many artifacts. Tell students that historians and archeologists have theories about why the Anasazi left and where they went. Explain that students will have an opportunity to research these theories after reading the book.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students a copy of the book and have them preview the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers and offer ideas as to what kind of book this is and what it might be about. Show students the title page. Talk about the information that is written on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name).
- Direct students to the table of contents and read the chapter titles.
- Show students the glossary and explain its purpose.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Make, revise, and confirm predictions**

- Tell students that a fun way to read that will help them understand a story is to make guesses, or predictions, about what will happen in the book.
- Model how to make a prediction as you preview the book.
Think-aloud: On the front cover, I see a group of buildings that look like houses, but there is a ladder to get into them instead of a staircase. On the back cover, I see a boy sitting in a room. I don't know why there is a hole in the floor. Since the title of the book is The Case of the Vanishing Anasazi, I think the book might be a mystery. The chapter titles in the table of contents tell me that I'm going to read about some ancient clues, but I don't know what the other chapter titles mean. I'll have to read the book to find out.
- Ask students to make predictions about what they think they will read 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 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 a word. They can look for base words within words, prefixes, suffixes, and/or other word endings. They can use the context to work out meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Write the following words from the content vocabulary on large pieces of paper to be hung up around the room: *mesas, petroglyphs, ruins, and kiva*. Read each word aloud with students.
- Place students in small groups and assign each group to a word poster. Have them discuss what they know about the meaning of their word and write a definition on the paper. Rotate the groups until each group has visited every word poster.
- Review each word and the information about the word that students wrote on the paper. Create a definition based on students' knowledge and write it on the board.
- Explain to students that sometimes they will not find any context clues that define an unfamiliar word. Point out that a glossary or a dictionary is a good source to utilize to find the definition of a word. Review with them how to locate a word and its definition in both a dictionary and the glossary. Point out the similarities and differences between the two sources.
- Have volunteers read the definition for each word from the glossary on page 26. Compare students' definitions with the glossary definitions. Use the comparison to modify the definition for each word on the board.

Set the Purpose

- Tell students as they read the book to make predictions about what will happen based on clues in the story. Remind them to revise or confirm their predictions as they learn more information about the characters and plot.

During Reading

Student Reading



Guide the reading: Have students read pages 4 through 14. Tell them to underline the words or phrases in the book that tell the names of the characters, where the action takes place, and any major events. If they finish before everyone else, they can go back and reread.

- When they have finished reading, have students identify the characters, setting, and major events they underlined.
- Have students explain why the first chapter is titled “Another Mystery.” Ask students to tell how the kiva, sipapu, and petroglyphs provide clues about the disappearance of the Anasazi. Ask students to explain Ricky’s role in Stanley’s caper.
- Model how to continue making predictions.
Think-aloud: I think Stanley is going to look for the petroglyphs. I’m not sure how his plastic decoder ring will help, but maybe it can decipher the pictures the Anasazi left behind. I’ll have to read the book to find out.
- Ask students what they think might happen next. Remind them as they read to pause and think about a prediction they’ve made that is confirmed by something they’ve read in the story. Tell them to revise their predictions if they come across information that makes them think differently than when they began reading.



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

- Discuss how making predictions about what will happen in the story keeps them actively involved in the reading process and helps them remember what they’ve read.

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

- **Discussion:** Ask students to share a few of their predictions they had to revise. Discuss how sometimes only a few of our predictions need to be revised, or changed. In other stories, especially in mysteries, we may need to revise many of our predictions as we read more clues.
- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain that most stories usually have four elements: *characters*, *setting*, *plot*, and *theme*. Tell students that these are what the author uses to make the story interesting. Explain that some authors focus on one element more than another, but most stories contain all four.
- On the board, draw and label a circle *Characters*. Review or explain that the characters are the people in this story. They may be major characters or minor characters. Explain that a major character is someone who must be in the story. Without that character, the story could not happen. Explain that a minor character may add interest but is not necessary to move the story along. Check for understanding by asking students to identify the major and minor characters they read about in the first chapter (major: Stanley, Ranger John; minor: Ricky). If students are in disagreement about whether Ranger John and/or Ricky is a major or minor character, have them discuss their positions.
- Draw and label another circle *Setting*. Review that the setting includes both where and when the story takes place. Check for understanding by reviewing where and when the first chapter in the book takes place (near to and at Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde National Park in southwest Colorado, in a modern time period).


- Draw and label another circle *Plot*. Tell students that this is a very important element because without the events, there would be no story. Check for understanding by having students tell the major events they read in chapter one. (Stanley was prepared to solve a mystery with his Super-Sleuth Kit. No one knows why the Anasazi suddenly left their homes. Stanley needs Ricky to cover for him, which he's done before.)
- Draw and label another circle *Theme*. Tell students that the theme of a story is what the author wants the reader to think about after the book is read. Explain that the theme is the "message" the author wants the reader to remember. Ask students what the theme of this story is. (A curious person may learn interesting things. There are many unsolved mysteries in our world.)
- **Check for understanding:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **story elements: identify characters, setting, plot, and theme worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their responses.

 Instruct students to use the last page of the book to write whether or not they think Stanley should have tried to solve the mystery of the Anasazi and to explain why or why not.

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: **Coordinate/cumulative adjectives**

- Write the words *coordinate* and *cumulative* on the board. Tell students that there are two easy tests to determine whether the adjectives are coordinate or cumulative. First, if they can insert the word *and* between the adjectives and maintain the meaning of the sentence, the adjectives are coordinate. Second, if they can reverse the order of the adjectives and maintain the meaning of the sentence, the adjectives are coordinate. If neither of these tests work, the adjectives are cumulative.
- Have students find the second paragraph on page 12. Ask them to find the words that describe the light shining on the Cliff Palace (soft, glowing light). Explain that a comma separates these adjectives because they are equally important in describing the light. Tell students that these are called *coordinate adjectives*.
- Explain that *cumulative adjectives* usually are arranged in a certain order, building the overall description of the noun. For example, write the following sentences: *Five nervous little birds sat on a branch. Nervous little five birds sat on a branch.* The first sentence sounds correct compared to the second. Also point out that colors are an exception and are always included as cumulative. (Example: *She wore a lightweight purple shirt.*)
- **Check for understanding:** Have students return to the second paragraph on page 12 and apply the tests. Confirm that *soft, glowing* are coordinate adjectives.
- Have students try the same test on the adjectives in the first sentence of the last paragraph (*mysterious super-sleuth*) on page 6 and tell what type of adjectives these are (cumulative).

 Have students go through the book, using different colored pencils to underline coordinate and cumulative adjectives. Have them write *CO* for coordinate and *CU* for cumulative. If time allows, discuss their responses.

Word Work: **Homophones**

- Write the words *our* and *hour* on the board. Review or explain that these words are often confused because they sound alike. Ask students to tell what each word means (belonging to us, 60 minutes). Have students find the first paragraph on page 12. Have them find the word that tells the length of time it will take to reach Cliff Palace. Ask them to explain why the word *our* would not work in the sentence. Ask a volunteer to use the word in a sentence.
- Write the words *one*, *won*, *new*, and *knew* on the board. Ask students to tell the meaning of each word. Direct students to page 22 to find the sentence with the word *one*. Ask a volunteer to read the sentence. Ask another volunteer to use the word *won* in a sentence. Direct students to page 21 to find the word *new*. Ask a volunteer to read the sentence. Ask another volunteer to use the word *knew* in a sentence.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Case of the Vanishing Anasazi

- **Check for understanding:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [homophones worksheet](#). Discuss their responses when students have finished.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, allow 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 another adventure for “Stanley DeCapers, Super-Sleuth.” Tell them to include the elements of setting, characters, and plot. Have students share their creations with the group.

Social Studies and Art Connection

Provide resources for students to research Anasazi petroglyphs. Have them talk about what archaeologists or historians think the pictures mean. Have students use pictures to write a message they would like to leave for others. Tell them to write the message in words on the back of their paper. Have students exchange picture messages and try to determine the message each wrote.

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.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- make, revise, and confirm predictions to understand and remember events in fiction text
- identify story elements of characters, setting, plot, and theme
- identify coordinate and cumulative adjectives
- understand and use homophones in class discussion and in a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

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