

## About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 836

### 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 S 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 vowel digraph ea
- 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, vowel digraph ea, proper nouns: names of people 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](https://www.readinga-z.com/vocabulary).

- Content words:  
 Story critical: **breaking** (v.), **code** (n.), **code talkers** (n.), **discrimination** (n.), **Navajo** (n.), **serve** (v.)  
 Enrichment: *marines* (n.), *symbols* (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. Record details from their prior knowledge on the board.

## 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**

- Explain to 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. Underline the key words. Have students share with a partner how you used details from the text to create the questions.
- Direct students to the table of contents, and read the section titles aloud with students. Have students work in groups to discuss the details suggested by the table of contents and to 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. Underline the key words.
- 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.
- 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. I could also ask to borrow money from someone else. Another possible solution would be to wait until the movie arrived at the cheap theaters, where the tickets cost less. After considering my options, I would then choose which solution worked the best for me and use it to solve my problem.*

- Write the possible solutions from the think-aloud beneath the word *solution* on the board. Have students discuss with a partner which solution they would choose to follow and why. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.
- 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. Call on groups to share one solution with the rest of the class, and record it beneath the *solution* heading.
- Discuss with students the consequences that would ensue from each solution. 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 and have students repeat.
- Guide students in using context to determine the meaning of each word. For example, say: *If I did not know the meaning of the word code, I could read the definition in the glossary, but I could also turn to the page it's found on and read the words and sentences around it. I can examine the photographs to see if they illuminate the meaning of the word. When I read page 8, I can see that the word code must mean a system of letters or symbols used to send secret messages.*
- 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.
- Ask students to share their pictures with a partner. Then, have them work with their partner to create oral sentences for each vocabulary word, referring to the pictures as necessary.


## 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 and underline the key words.
  - Review with students the remaining questions on the board and have students point to those that were answered by information in the book. Have students discuss with a partner the answers to those questions. 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. Have them write one question on a separate sheet of paper, using key words and pictures as necessary. Invite volunteers to share a question with the rest of the class, and record new questions on the board with underlined key words.
  - Review with students the problems and solutions discussed earlier. Erase any prior information from the board. Have students work in groups to discuss the problem facing the American military (*the enemy was breaking all of their coded messages*). Call on groups 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 *solution* heading on the board.
  - Ask students to point to the solution they would choose, and invite volunteers to explain their reasoning. Point out to students that each solution will have different consequences, with the consequences being the events that result from the solution. Explain 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 and whether the book answered any previous questions. Have them write one question on their separate sheet of paper. Invite volunteers to share new questions with the rest of the class, and add them to the board with underlined key words.
  - Have students work in groups to determine the solution the military pursued to solve their problem. Call on groups 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*. Discuss with students 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. Have students discuss in groups what to do if the solution to their problem doesn't actually 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 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 share with a partner new questions they had as they read the final portion of the book. Have students write one more question on their separate sheet of paper, using key words and pictures as necessary. 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 the remaining unanswered questions, and have students point to those that were answered.
- Have students work in groups to discuss how the book answered these questions. Then, invite 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 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.
- Have students work in groups to discuss the consequences of the solution. Guide them with questions such as the following: *What happened after the military began using the new code? Did the code help the American military? How would the war have been different if they never used the Navajo code talkers?* 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

### Phonics: Vowel digraph ea

- Write the word *bread* on the board and read it aloud with students.
- Ask students what vowel sound they hear in the middle of the word (short /e/ sound). Run your finger under the letters in the word as students say the whole word aloud. Ask students to identify the letters that stand for the short /e/ sound in the word *bread*.
- Circle the *ea* in the word *break* and explain to students that the letters *ea* can stand for the short /e/ sound. Say the following words one at a time, emphasizing the middle sound: *bread* and *head*. Ask students to spell the words aloud as you write them on the board.
- Write the word *idea* on the board and read it aloud with students.



- Ask students to identify the vowel sound they hear at the end of the word (long /e/ sound). Run your finger under the letters in the word as students say the whole word aloud. Ask students to identify the letters that stand for the long /e/ sound in the word *heat*.
- Circle the *ea* in the word *heat*, and review with students that the letters *ea* can also stand for the long /e/ sound. Say the words *lead* and *bead* aloud, and explain to students that these words use the vowel digraph *ea* to create the long /e/ sound. Repeat the words, and have students spell them aloud to a partner. Invite volunteers to share the correct spelling with the rest of the class.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in groups to locate and circle ten words that contain the vowel digraph *ea* in the book. Have students take turns in their group to read aloud the words they circled. Call on students to share a word with the rest of the class, write it on the board, and have students identify whether the *ea* digraph stands for the short /e/ sound or long /e/ sound. Repeat as time allows.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [vowel-digraph-ea worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

## 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.
- Explain to students that a *proper noun* is the name of a *specific person, place, or thing*. Explain that proper nouns are always capitalized.
- Refer to the nouns on the board. Ask students to work in groups to discuss specific examples of any of those nouns. Invite 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 some proper nouns that are names of people, without using capitals. Invite volunteers to come to the board and add capital letters to each word.
- Explain to students that the name of a person or a group of people is a specific noun 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. Brainstorm to generate other examples of groups of people, such as nationalities, clubs, business, and so on. Record a list of examples 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 name groups of people. Draw a star beside each of the group names.
- **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 discuss with a partner which word comes first in alphabetical order and why. Invite a volunteer to identify the word that comes first. 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 student pairs 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*). Add *Japan* to the list on the board.
- Write the word *states* on the board, and ask students to compare it to the word *serve*. Explain to 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 their 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 word to its proper place in the list. Have other students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree with its placement.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following words on the board: *Navajo*, *break*, *war*, *language*, and *bear*. Read them aloud with students. Have students work in groups to place the words in a list of alphabetical order. Invite volunteers to share their list aloud, and have other students give a thumbs-up signal if they agree the list is correctly alphabetized.

## 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](http://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. 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. Have students create a poster depicting the information they learned, and present their poster to the class. Lead students in filling in the *L* column of their KWL chart. Have students share with a partner what they still want to learn, and invite volunteers to share details with the rest of the class. Record this information in the *W* column of the chart.

## 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;
- accurately identify short /e/ sound and long /e/ sound represented by the vowel digraph ea 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.

### Comprehension Checks

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