



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction / Personal Narrative Page Count: 16 Word Count: 844

Book Summary

Birdie is *Off to Join the Circus!* Follow along with Birdie as she prepares for the big show at circus camp. Students will enjoy an inside look into stilt walking, aerial silks, clowning, and more. Detailed photographs keep students engaged with the fun, unusual, and sometimes challenging activities.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Ask and answer questions to understand text
- Main idea and details
- Identify vowel diphthong /ou/
- Recognize and use combined sentences
- Identify and understand the use of suffix *-ing*

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—*Off to Join the Circus* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- Dictionary
- *KWLS / Ask and answer questions, main idea and details, combined sentences 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

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

- Content words:

Story critical: *acrobats* (n.), *audience* (n.), *circus* (n.), *pose* (n.), *recital* (n.), *skits* (n.)

Enrichment: *grand finale* (n.), *steady* (adj.), *unison* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students if they have ever seen or been to a circus. Invite them to share their experiences of the circus including different acts and types of performers. List their responses on the board.
- Show students the cover of the book and read the title. Explain that the girl on the cover is named Birdie and she is training in all sorts of circus activities. Ask students what kinds of questions they may have about the book on the basis of what they have seen so far. Record these questions 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 effective readers help themselves to understand what they are reading by asking questions before, during, and after reading. Discuss with students how interacting with the text by asking questions will help them understand and remember what they read.
- Model how to ask questions as you preview the book.
Think-aloud: Before I start reading, I usually have several questions that come to mind about the topic or title of the book. From what I see on the cover and title page, it appears that this book is about a young girl practicing for the circus. I'm curious to know what I will learn about training for the circus and what kinds of activities the girl will do. When I look at the cover, I see that it is titled Off to Join the Circus. This makes me wonder if the girl is really going to join the circus. As I read, I will be curious to see if I can discover the answers to some of my questions. This helps me understand what I am reading and makes reading enjoyable.
- Introduce and explain the **KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet** to students. Draw a similar chart on the board. Have them write one or two things they know about the circus in the *K* section of the worksheet and one or two questions in the *W* section. Invite students to share some of their questions. Add any new questions to the list on the board.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Main idea and details**

- Explain that a book has a general topic that is the subject of the book; this is the *main idea* of the book. The extra information or descriptions that help us to better understand the book are the *details*. Explain to students that we need both the main idea and the details in order to fully understand and enjoy each book.
- Explain that sometimes there is so much information on a topic that it is grouped into sections, and each section has its own main idea. Often, the reader must carefully determine the main idea as well as the extra details that support or enhance the main idea. Have students view the table of contents. Point out to students that the table of contents is a good guide for determining how the information in the book has been organized. Say: *As I view the table of contents, I notice that this book is divided into seven sections. As I read, I will look for the main idea of each section and the details that support it.*

Introduce the Vocabulary

- Write the following content vocabulary words on the board: *acrobats*, *audience*, *skit*, and *recital*.
- Point out that these four words can be found in the text and that knowing what they mean will help students understand what they are reading. Divide students into pairs and give each set of students a blank piece of paper. Have students divide the paper into four sections and label each section with one vocabulary word. Invite them to draw and write what they know about each word and create a definition using their own prior knowledge.
- Model how students can use a dictionary to find the meaning of a word. Have them locate the word *audience* in the dictionary. Invite a volunteer to read the definition aloud.
- Show students the glossary on page 16. Have students locate the word *audience* in the glossary. Point out that the dictionary has multiple definitions for the word *audience*, depending on the usage. Have students compare the dictionary definition with the glossary definition, and ask them which dictionary definition is the closest. Ask them to compare this definition with their prior knowledge of the word.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Off to Join the Circus

- Ask students to locate the word *audience* on page 14 and read the sentence containing the word aloud. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words. Ask students to compare and contrast the three sources—the dictionary, the glossary, and the text.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about Birdie and her experiences at circus camp. 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 6. Encourage those who finish early to go back and reread. Ask students to go back and look at their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet and see if this part of the text answered any of their questions.
- Model answering a question and filling in the second section of the ask-and-answer-questions chart on the board.

Think-aloud: Before reading, more than one question came to mind about this book. I was curious about the girl on the cover and wondered if she was really going to join the circus. While reading, I discovered that the girl's name is Birdie and she has just finished second grade. I also learned that Birdie is not going to join the circus, but she is going to circus camp. Birdie had so much fun at circus camp the first time she went that she is going back! I will write these answers on the KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions chart on the board.


- Ask students to write any additional questions they raised on their KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read the book.
- Model identifying the main idea and details for a specific section of the book.
Think-aloud: The section titled "Taiko" contains information about Birdie's first class of the day at circus camp. I learned that the word Taiko means "great drum" in Japanese and that these drums are made of wood. I also learned that two or three kids play one drum at a time using wooden sticks called bachi. The teacher leads the class, and the kids all play together to make one mighty sound. I will highlight this information. On the basis of what I have read so far, I think the main idea of this section is: Birdie's first class activity is Taiko class where she and her classmates play big drums together.

 Ask students to highlight the same words and phrases in their books. Next, introduce and explain the [main-idea-and-details worksheet](#) to students. Draw a similar diagram on the board and model how to record the main idea and supporting details. Remind students to refer to the words or phrases they highlighted. Record their responses in the appropriate circles on the board.

- **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 7 and 8. Have them write answers they found while reading on their worksheet and any additional questions that came to mind as they read. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read this section.

 Have students work in pairs to reread pages 7 and 8. Ask students to underline or highlight the important words and phrases. Encourage them to work with their partner to identify the main idea of the section.

- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to look for and write answers on their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their worksheet as they read. Remind them to circle or highlight the important events that occur in each section and to determine the main idea.

 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


- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading and looking for the answers while reading keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they read.
- **Think-aloud:** *Before reading, I wanted to know about the girl on the cover and if she was off to join the circus. Now I know that the girl's name is Birdie and she went to circus camp. I learned that Birdie plays a drum called a Taiko at camp and that she knows how to walk on stilts. I also learned that Birdie and the others practice on aerial silks or pieces of fabric that hang from the ceiling. I will record all of this information in the L section of my KWLS chart.*
- **Independent practice:** Point out to students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm to find other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions (e.g., websites, books, and so on). Invite students to write questions they still have about circus camp in the S section of the worksheet. Ask students to share questions they added.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Discuss how stopping to review the important details helped students remember the facts and better understand the big ideas in the book. Remind students that books are often organized into smaller sections so that the information is easy to read and remember. Point out that each section has a main idea and supporting details.
- **Independent practice:** Ask students to reread the section “The Big Show” and have them complete the main-idea-and-details worksheet. If time allows, discuss their responses.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned all about circus camp. Now that you know this information, would you like to attend circus camp? Why or why not? If so, which activities do you think you would enjoy the most? Which activities would you enjoy the least?

Build Skills

Phonics: Vowel diphthong /ou/: *ou, ow*

- Write the words *sound* and *frown* on the board. Read the words aloud with students.
- Ask students what the two words have in common. Circle the vowel diphthongs *ou* and *ow*, and point out that both letter combinations make the /ou/ sound. Explain to students that the letter combinations *ou* and *ow* will often, but not always, make this sound.
- Have students reread the words *sound* and *frown* aloud while emphasizing the /ou/ sound.
-  **Check for understanding:** Have students turn to page 8 and locate the third sentence. Read the sentence aloud as students follow along. Ask students to circle all the words in the sentence that include the vowel diphthong *ou* like in the word *sound* (*our, around*). Next, have students turn to page 12 and locate the last sentence of the first paragraph. Have students circle the words in the sentence with the vowel diphthong *ow* like in the word *frown* (*how, clown*).
- **Independent practice:** Have students work in pairs to reread the section titled “Taiko” and circle all the words with vowel diphthong *ou* and *ow* that make the /ou/ sound (*our, out, sound, bow*).

Grammar and Mechanics: Combined sentences

- Write the following sentences on the board: *Birdie is eight years old. Birdie just finished second grade.* Ask students to identify the subject of each sentence (or what the sentence is about). Underline the subjects. Review or explain that two short sentences that share the same subject can be combined into one sentence by using the conjunction *and*. Ask students how to rewrite the sentences on the board, combining them into one sentence. (*Birdie is eight years old and just finished second grade*).

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Off to Join the Circus

- Write the following sentences on the board: *Birdie does tricks with hula hoops. Birdie's friend does tricks with hula hoops.* Ask students to identify the predicate (or what the subject is, says, or does) in each sentence. Underline each predicate. Review or explain that two short sentences that share the same predicate can be combined into one sentence by using the conjunction *and*. Ask students how to rewrite the sentences on the board. (*Birdie and her friend do tricks with hula hoops*).
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following sentences on the board. Have students use a paper and a pencil to copy and combine the sentences.
Birdie strikes a clown pose. Birdie considered her clown character.
Emma helps untangle Birdie. Barry helps untangle Birdie.
We beat the drums. We bow to our teacher.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [combined sentences worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.

Word Work: **Suffix -ing**

- Write the word *reading* on the board. Ask students to identify the root word (*read*) and write it next to *reading*. Have students use both words in a sentence.
- Explain or review that a suffix is a syllable, or group of letters, added to the end of a word to alter or change its meaning or its verb tense. An example of a suffix is *-ing*.
- Write the words *walk*, *clap*, and *turn* on the board. Have volunteers add the suffix *-ing* to each word (*walking*, *clapping*, *turning*). Discuss how, when the suffix is added, it changes the verb tense of the words. The words now describe an action that is happening right now, or in the present tense.
- Have students turn to page 6, and read the second sentence aloud. Point out the word *beating*. Write the word *beating* on the board and circle the word *beat*. Discuss with students how adding the suffix *-ing* changed the word to better describe how the drummers play the drums. Have volunteers use each word in a sentence to demonstrate the difference between *beat* and *beating*.
- **Check for understanding:** Have student pairs search for other words with the suffix *-ing* throughout the book. Have them take turns explaining what the root word is.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [suffix -ing worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss answers aloud after they are finished.

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 how a reader asks questions then reflects on the answers while reading.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing and Art Connection

Invite students to create a program or brochure that could be given to the audience the night of the big show. Have students include and write brief summaries about each activity performed, on the basis of the information they learned from the text. Remind students that a program for a performance should be written in a way that is appealing to the reader and should be easy to read and visually appealing. Provide examples of programs from other types of performances. Have students illustrate their programs and present them to the class.

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

Social Studies Connection

Create a classroom circus that students can share with other classes or out in the community, such as at a nursing home. Invite students to brainstorm to produce ideas for different activities they can perform including clowning, juggling, and so on. Have students create costumes and organize the performance. Students may also create a program to provide the audience that gives information about the big show.

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:

- consistently use the strategy of asking and answering questions to comprehend the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify the main idea and supporting details in the text and on a worksheet
- accurately identify vowel diphthongs *ou* and *ow* in the text and during discussion
- correctly identify compound sentences in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet
- consistently identify and understand the use of the suffix *-ing* in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

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