

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction / Personal Narrative Page Count: 16 Word Count: 656

Book Summary

The Day I Couldn't Breathe tells the true story of one girl's asthma attack. While running the mile for a physical fitness test, she feels her chest begin to tighten. A friend helps her to the nurse's office, where they find her inhaler is empty! What will they do? Students will enjoy this exciting book while learning about one person's experience with asthma. Illustrations support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Retell

Objectives

- Retell to understand and remember story events
- Sequence events
- Identify vowel digraph ea
- Identify proper nouns as names of people
- Identify and create compound words

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—*The Day I Couldn't Breathe* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- Sticky notes
- Dictionary
- Extra copy of the book
- [Sequence events, proper nouns, compound words 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: *asthma* (n.), *inhaler* (n.), *panicked* (v.), *paramedics* (n.), *triggers* (n.), *wheeze* (v.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the word *asthma* on the board. Have students read the word and share with a partner what they think the word means. Explain to the class that asthma is a medical condition that makes it difficult for a person to breathe. Point out that when people have asthma, they have to control the disease by learning their triggers and taking the right medicine when necessary.
- If possible, show students an asthma inhaler, and explain how it works.

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, illustrator's name).
- Preview the table of contents on page 3. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of the book. Ask students what they expect to read about in the book, on the basis of what they see in the table of contents. (Accept all answers that students can justify.)

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Retell**

- Explain to students that one way to understand and remember what they are reading is to stop occasionally during their reading to retell in their mind what is happening in the story.
- Explain to students that when someone retells something, he or she explains the details of what happened in order. Point out that people retell stories as part of their daily lives, such as explaining what happened in school to a student who was absent. Ask students to share other examples of when people might give a retelling.
- Model retelling a familiar story in detail, such as *The Three Little Pigs*.
Think-aloud: *In The Three Little Pigs, three pigs each decide to build a house. The first pig decides to make his house out of straw. He gathers all of the materials and builds his house. The second pig decides to build his house out of sticks. He gathers all of the materials and builds his house. The third pig gathers the materials and builds his house out of bricks. One day a big bad wolf comes to the house of the first little pig. He wants the little pig to let him inside and says, "I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down."*
- Continue retelling in detail to the end of the story. Invite students to suggest information for the retelling of this story.
- Have students place sticky notes on pages 5, 7, 10, 12, and 15 of their books. Explain that as they read, they should stop after reading these pages to think about what has happened in the story. Encourage students to retell in their mind what happens in the story as they read.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Sequence events**

- Review or explain that writers present the events of a story in a particular order. Signal words are often provided to help readers identify the order of the events. Ask students to identify examples of signal words (*today, first, next, then, last, finally, dates, and so on*).
- Model how to sequence events.
Think-aloud: *I know that a process, like a story, also has a sequence of events. For example, when I call someone on the phone, first I turn the phone on. Next, I dial the number using the number pad on the phone. Then, I hold one end of the receiver to my ear and listen. Last, I speak into the other end of the receiver.*
- Have volunteers explain the order of a simple process, such as making a sandwich or getting ready for school. Use time and order words (*first, next, and so on*) to record the steps on the board.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- Write the following words from the content vocabulary on the board: *asthma, inhaler, and wheeze*.
- Give groups of students three pieces of blank paper. Have them write or draw what they know about each word. Create a definition for each word using students' prior knowledge.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Day I Couldn't Breathe

- Review that the glossary contains a list of vocabulary words and their definitions. Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have them locate the glossary at the back of the book. Invite a volunteer to read the definition for *asthma* in the glossary. Have a volunteer also look up the vocabulary word in the dictionary. Have students compare the definitions with their prior knowledge of the word. Then have them follow along on page 6 as you read the sentence in which the word *asthma* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words.
- Have students look at the illustration on the front cover. Have them write a short paragraph about the girl in the illustration, using all three vocabulary words. Repeat the activity after reading the book, to check for student understanding of the vocabulary.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about the story. Remind them to stop reading at the end of each page with a sticky note to quickly retell in their mind the details of the events so far in the story. Remind students to think about the sequence of events from each section of the text as they read.

During Reading

Student Reading




- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 5. Have them underline the important events as they read. Encourage those who finish early to go back and reread.
- Cut out pages from an extra copy of the book. Place pages 4 and 5 in a pocket chart or along the ledge of the board.
- Model retelling the events of the story using the illustrations as a guide.
Think-aloud: I stopped after a few pages to retell in my mind what I had read so far. First, the class was getting ready to run the mile outside for their yearly fitness tests. Next, the students all stood at the starting line, stretching and getting ready. Then, Mr. Markel blew his whistle, and they all took off. After that, the main character felt strong and quick, and she felt she had a chance to win it all. She really wanted that big blue ribbon and a letter from the president.
- Remind students that a retelling includes details and a description about the events of a story, whereas listing a sequence of events tells the most important events that someone would need to know to tell the story correctly, without adding details.
- Write the important details that were just used for the retelling on the board, using short phrases for each point (*stood at the starting line, Mr. Markel blew whistle, took off running*). Number the events as you write them in order.
- Point out that other information in the paragraph includes details that make the story interesting, but are not important to the sequence of events. (For example, *I wanted that big blue ribbon and a letter from the president* is not included in the sequence of events on the board, but could be restated during a retelling of the section.) Explain that supporting details are not included when sequencing events; only the most important information is listed in the most concise wording possible. Explain that complete sentences aren't always necessary when listing events in order.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read to the end of page 10. Post pages 6 through 10 next to the pages from the beginning of the story. Ask students to use the illustrations as a guide to retell the details to a partner, regarding the events after the race started. Listen to students' retellings for correct order and description of the story events. Discuss the retelling of these pages as a class.
- Write the important events on the board, using short phrases for each point and numbering them in order (*hurt to breathe halfway through the second lap; stopped running and crossed the field; Lauren walked her to the nurse; Mrs. Marge handed her the inhaler; shook it, squeezed, and inhaled; not enough medicine came out; Mrs. Marge called the ambulance*).

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Day I Couldn't Breathe

- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to underline important details and to retell the important events in the story in their own words.

 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

- Place pages 11 and 12 in a pocket chart or along the ledge of the board. Retell in detail with students the events of the story from pages 11 and 12, modeling how to use the illustrations from the book.
- **Think-aloud:** *First, the paramedics showed up and helped her into the ambulance. Next, she breathed in medicine using a plastic mask over her mouth. She said it tasted bad, but it helped her. After that, the ambulance sped through traffic with the siren blaring. When the ambulance reached the hospital, she asked if she could go back to school to finish her mile. The paramedic told her she needed to see a doctor first. Finally, the paramedic helped her out of the ambulance and took her into the hospital.*
- Have volunteers retell the events to the end of the book, using the illustrations from pages 13 through 15 of the book. Then have students retell the story to a partner, starting at the beginning. Listen for whether students include the following: main characters, setting, correct events in order, and events in detail.
- Ask students how retelling the events of the story in their mind as they read helped them understand and remember the story.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Review the last sequence of events that was identified and written on the board (hurt to breathe halfway through the second lap; stopped running and crossed the field; Lauren walked her to the nurse; Mrs. Marge handed her the inhaler; shook it, squeezed, and inhaled; not enough medicine came out; Mrs. Marge called the ambulance).
- Practice restating the events using sequencing words (*first, next, then, after that*, and so on). Explain that it is important for students to use their own words, when writing phrases about each event.

 Have students turn to pages 11 and 12, and have them underline the most important events in the section. Have students work with a partner, writing these events in order on a separate piece of paper. Remind them to number the events as they go. When students finish, identify and write the important events in order on the board.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [sequence events worksheet](#). When students have finished working, discuss their answers.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you read a story about a girl having an asthma attack and learned a little about what can cause an attack like this. Now that you know this information, what will you do if you ever see somebody doubled over, wheezing, or struggling for breath?

Build Skills


Phonics: Vowel digraph ea

- Have students turn to the title page and find the word *breathe*. Write the word *breathe* on the board and point to the letters *ea*. Explain to students that the letters *e* and *a* together stand for the long /e/ vowel sound they hear in the middle of the word *breathe*.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

The Day I Couldn't Breathe

- Explain that the *ea* letter combination is one of the letter combinations that stand for the long /e/ sound. Explain to students that this combination of letters is called a long /e/ digraph.
- Write the word *teacher* on the board. Point out the letter combination that stands for the long /e/ sound, and ask students to blend the letters *e* and *a* together to make the same vowel sound as in *breathe*. Point out that the long /e/ sound comes in the middle of this word. Next, run your finger under the letters as you blend the four sounds in *teacher*: /t/ea/ch/er/. Point out that even though there are seven letters, there are four sounds blended together to form the word. Then have students blend the word aloud with you as you run your finger under the letters.
- Write the words *sea* and *say* on the board and say them aloud. Ask students which word contains the same vowel sound as in *teacher*. Make sure students can differentiate between the two vowel sounds. Give other examples if necessary.


 **Check for understanding:** Have students turn to page 5. Have them to find and circle the words that have a long /e/ vowel digraph *ea* (*teacher, leaned, lead, year*).

Grammar and Mechanics: **Proper nouns: Names of people**

- Review or explain that a *common noun* is a *person, place, or thing*. Ask students to return to page 5, and give examples of common nouns from the text (*gym, whistle, line, legs*, and so on).
- Review or explain that a *proper noun* is the name of a *specific person, place, or thing*. Point out that a proper noun always begins with a capital letter. Write examples of proper nouns from page 5 on the board (*Mr. Markel, I*).
- **Check for understanding:** Write a list of nouns on the board, and ask students to give examples of proper nouns that correlate with each noun (*girl, Anabella; boy, Greyson; school, Catharine Blaine Elementary; city, Seattle; country, United States of America*; and so on).
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [proper nouns worksheet](#). When students have finished working, discuss their answers.

Word Work: **Compound words**

- Write the word *afternoon* on the board. Ask students which two words were joined together in the word *afternoon* (*after* and *noon*). Explain that this word is called a *compound word*. A compound word contains two words that together create one meaning. Explain that the definitions of the two separate words can help students figure out the meaning of the bigger word (*after* the *noon* hour on the clock).
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Halfway through the second lap, it hurt to breathe.* Have students read the sentence and identify the compound word (*halfway*). Ask them which two words are joined together in the word *halfway* (*half* and *way*). Ask a volunteer to share how the definitions of the two separate words can be used to figure out the meaning of the bigger word.

 **Check for understanding:** Have students read page 15 in their book. Have them identify and underline the compound words on the page (*everyone, inside*). Ask students to circle the two words contained in each compound word. Have them use these words to discuss the meaning of the larger word with a partner. Then discuss the meaning of the words with students as a group. Point out that this tip for finding the definition works better for some compound words than others and that not every compound word is easily defined by its two separate parts.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [compound words worksheet](#). When students finish, discuss their answers aloud.

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. With someone at home, have students practice retelling the story.

Extend the Reading

Personal Narrative Writing Connection

Write *personal narrative* on the board and explain that in this form, writers write about something that happened in their own lives. Have students write a story about an event from their own lives. Have them brainstorm first, thinking about an accident or something that happened when they got hurt, or something exciting that happened to them such as when they lost a tooth or when they got their first bike. Remind them to use interesting details and adjectives, and encourage them to add dialogue.

Visit [WritingA-Z.com](https://www.writinga-z.com) for a lesson and leveled materials on personal narrative writing.

Science Connection

Bring in books and charts about the human body and show students pictures and diagrams of the lungs. Have students study how the body moves air in and out, and discuss what happens with an asthma attack to change that process. Talk about what happens to the lungs and passageways when a person breathes in asthma medication. Talk about different ways to manage asthma, such as knowing and avoiding triggers, carrying the appropriate medication, and always being prepared.

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:

- accurately and consistently demonstrate retelling the story during discussion
- accurately sequence events in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet
- fluently read the vowel digraph *ea* during discussion and independently
- identify proper nouns during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify and form compound words during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

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