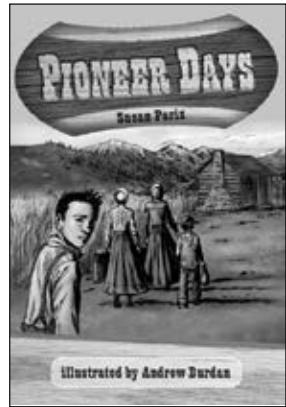


Pioneer Days

by Susan Paris

illustrated by Andrew Burden



Book Summary

Dad volunteers the family to become pioneers for a reality TV show. It doesn't take long for some family members to find the adjustment too difficult. This humorous story explores themes of trust and honesty.

Features of the Book

- Fiction
- First-person narrative
- Reality TV
- Comparisons of past and present ways of life

Purpose

Pioneer Days can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

- asking questions;
- analysing characters and their relationships;
- comparing and evaluating past and present ways of living.

Investigation Tools

- Weighing Both Sides – Pioneer Life, page 29
- Looking Closer – The Pioneer Cabin, pages 30–31
- Step by Step – Making Bread, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

- Asking questions
- Analysing characters and their relationships

Introducing the text

Show the students the cover of the book.

- Why do you think the cover shows modern as well as old-time images?
- Have you watched TV shows where people live as if they are in another time or place?

Explore the students' ideas and ask questions to find out what they know about the days of the pioneers.

Explain that they will use the strategy of asking questions to make meaning from the text and to explore the characters and their relationships.

Reading and discussing the text

Tell the students that you will give them questions to think about as they read and that you want them to develop their own questions. They could write their questions on sticky notes. At the end of each chapter, allow a brief discussion, then pose a question for the next chapter.

Encourage the students to notice how this strategy helps them gain meaning from the text. These are some possible questions for each chapter:

Chapter 1

- How will the characters react to Dad's news?

Chapter 2

- What are the differences between pioneer life and the family's regular life? What aspects of pioneer life will be most difficult? How can you tell?

Chapter 3

- How is each character adapting? What challenges does each person face?

Chapter 4

- What effect is the camera crew having? Would the family behave differently if they weren't being filmed?

Chapter 5

- What could be “the best ending ever”? How do you think the story will end?

Ask the students to read the information on pages 29 to 32.

- Examine the diagram of the pioneer cabin on pages 30 and 31. How does it compare with houses and apartments we live in today?
- Have you ever made bread? Read the recipe for corn bread on page 32. Could you make this? Why was it so hard for Hannah to make?

Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson, during later reading sessions as mini-lessons, or as independent activities.

S Comparing and evaluating past and present ways of living

Ask the students to form two teams to debate the topic “Life in pioneer days was better than today.” The teams can reread the text and use other sources of information to support their positions. Have them present their debate to the class.

An alternative way to stage the debate is to assign sides, tell the teams to stand facing each other, then give each person thirty seconds to state their case. After the teams have given their arguments, tell them to switch sides and argue the opposing point of view.

S Comparing and evaluating past and present ways of living

If you are able to bake at school, ask the students to bring ingredients and bake a loaf of bread, using the recipe on page 32. The students could share it with the class and discuss how different it might have been for pioneers to make the same bread.

S Analysing characters and their relationships

Assign the students a character (Mum, Dad, Hannah, Matthew, and Rory) and ask them to reread the story, making notes about their character.

- Consider the age and personality of your character, their particular challenges, and the things they did well. What conclusions can you draw about the character?
- What are the relationships like between your character and the others? Who does your character get along well with?
- How is the character like and unlike you? Do you have anything in common with the character? How similar would your reactions be to theirs?

 The students can use copies of the blackline master to record their character analysis.