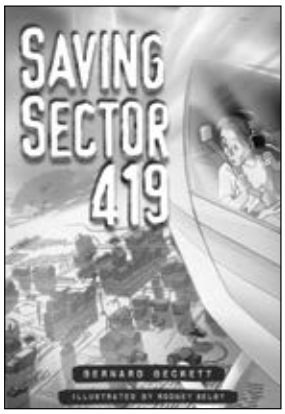
Saving Sector 419



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Book Summary

A dangerous virus has taken hold in Michelle's home town, and she is asked to help with an evacuation so the town can be decontaminated. This futuristic story shows Michelle's dilemma as she has to choose whether to lie to her neighbours in order to help them.

Features of the Book

- Fiction
- Problem solving
- Theme of problems that can be caused by scientific experimentation
- Scientific information

Purpose

Saving Sector 419 can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

- **S** evaluating ideas;
- **S** making predictions;
- **S** analysing a character;
- **S** exploring how people have learnt to alter genes to change how a plant or creature looks or behaves;
- **S** understanding that each organism carries in its genes a set of instructions for how it looks and behaves;
- **S** examining how altering an organism's genes can have unforeseen effects.

Investigation Tools

- Weighing Both Sides – Genetic Engineering, page 29
- Looking Closer – Parasites, pages 30–31
- Digging Deeper – Biosafety, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

- **S** Evaluating ideas
- **S** Making predictions
- **S** Analysing a character

Introducing the text

– *What do you know about genetic engineering? Is it good or bad?*
– *What would you do if you were asked to save your town from a terrible disease?*

Explain to the students that they will read a fictional story about a girl who is asked to help save her town from a genetic engineering experiment gone wrong. Tell them that you'll be asking them to practise using the reading strategies of making predictions and evaluating ideas.

– *Read the blurb on the back cover and the table of contents. What predictions can you make about this story? Keep them in mind so that you can confirm or revise them as you read.*

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read Chapter 1, then compare the events with their predictions. They can discuss their predictions with a partner.

- *What have we learnt about Michelle? Where is she? Why is she there?*
- *Does the plot seem believable? Why/why not?*

As the students read to the end of Chapter 2, remind them to check their predictions and discuss them with their partner.

- *What more have you learnt about Michelle?*
- *What have you learnt from her reactions to people and events?*
- *Do the situation and the setting seem realistic?*
- *When do you think this story is set? Why?*

The students can read to the end of page 15.

- *Explain what happened to the rats. Could this really happen? Why/why not?*
- *What do you think about the scientists' reasons for experimenting with animals? Do you agree or disagree with them?*
- *How did Michelle react? What does this tell us about her?*
- *What do you predict will happen next?*

The students can now read to the end of Chapter 3, checking and sharing their predictions.

- *How would you rate the chances of the plan working?*

Ask the students to read to the end of the story (page 28), then discuss the outcome with their partners.

The students can read the information on pages 29 to 32 silently.

- *How does this information add to the story?*
- *If you wanted to investigate the facts behind one other aspect of the story, what would you choose? Why?*

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 Evaluating ideas

The students can reread the information on page 32 and use it to evaluate the precautions taken in the story. They could imagine they have been asked to review the safety of the laboratory and the release site (sector 419) and write a report on their findings. They will need to invent a scenario where the parasite is transferred from emus to humans.

S Analysing a character

Michelle is asked to carry out an important task to save her town. The students can use the blackline master to write a newspaper article that describes her character and what she had to do.

S Exploring how people have learnt to alter genes to change how a plant or creature looks or behaves

The students can come up with arguments for and against altering genes to bring about one of these effects:

- to make cockroaches afraid of the dark;
- to produce square tomatoes;
- to make chocolate-flavoured brussel sprouts.

Alternatively, the students can think of their own wacky ideas.