

Brave As

by Janice Marriott

illustrated by Gus Hunter



Book Summary

Matt has a lot on his mind – like the speech he has to give in class that day and the strange phone call from Jules, the school bully. But as Matt begins to confront and resolve each problem, life doesn't seem so bad after all.

Features of the Book

- The perspectives in the illustrations
- The facial expressions and body language of the characters
- Matt's "built-in picture screen"
- The special nature of Matt's speech problem
- The different ideas of bravery
- Thought bubbles
- The humor of the author's style
- Descriptive language – *A tide of red flooded his skin; My body and mind were unplugged*

Purpose

Brave As can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- relating ideas and events to students' own experiences;
- predicting possible outcomes;
- clarifying complex concepts;
- describing the mental images evoked by the text;
- identifying and discussing inflected forms of verbs;
- comparing different texts by the same author.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- Relating ideas and events to students' own experiences
- Predicting possible outcomes
- Clarifying complex concepts
- Describing the mental images evoked by the text

Introducing the text

Discuss some of the problems that the students may have faced at school.

- *What is a bully?*
- *Have you ever felt scared of another student?*
- *How did you solve that problem?*

Talk about situations when students have had to do something that they were really worried about.

- *What did you have to do?*
- *Can you describe the way you felt before, during, and after the event?*

Discussing these issues before the students read the book will help to activate their prior knowledge and give them a more meaningful reading experience.

Look at the cover of the book together and discuss the title and illustration.

- *What do you think is happening here?*
- *What can you tell from the expressions on the characters' faces?*

Ask the students what the word "brave" means to them.

Read the blurb on the back cover and ask the students to discuss what information this gives them.

- *Could giving a speech to the class really be that scary? Why?*

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read chapter 1 independently. As they read, they could think about the following questions:

- *What do you notice about the way Matt speaks? (he has a stutter)*
- *What things are making him feel more and more uptight?*

When the students have finished reading, focus on the purpose-setting questions above. The students may give the following responses to the second question:

- He doesn't want a haircut.
- He doesn't want to meet Wayne, his mother's new friend.
- His mother is being bossy.
- He forgot his speech folder.

Ask the students to read the rest of chapter 2 and to note the other bad thing that happens to Matt.

- *How does Matt describe how he feels? Find phrases or sentences in the story that tell you this.*

Some of the students' examples might be:

- I wished a huge excavator were coming down the road with its jaws open and I could hop in and be crushed to bits.
- I must have flipped into a different universe.

Discuss the way that the author's language can create vivid mental images.

- *What does the way Matt describes things tell you about his imagination?*

The students can now read the rest of the story independently. Ask them to be aware of the way Matt thinks about himself and what's happening to him and to note when this changes. When the students have finished reading, discuss the event on page 42.

- *How did Matt's thinking change?*
- *What did he do to get to the end of his speech without stopping?*

Discuss the idea of bravery from the perspectives of Matt and Jules.

- *Do they have the same idea of what bravery is?*
- *Which of the actions in the text would you describe as "brave"?*

Ask the students to justify their answers.

Revisiting the Text

The suggested activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson if appropriate or could be taken as a mini-lesson at a later time.

S Describing the mental images evoked by the text

In this story, Matt has a lot of internal dialogue running through his head. The effect of this is heightened by the illustrations. Find the examples of the dialogue on pages 21, 25, and 31 and discuss how effective they are.

- *Do they help you to understand how Matt is feeling?*

Now find other descriptions from Matt's internal dialogue and ask the students to describe or illustrate them. They could use the blackline master on page 79 to describe how Matt might see a range of images on his "internal picture screen."

S Identifying and discussing inflected forms of verbs

Discuss how verbs can have a range of different endings. Choose the root form of a verb, such as "jump," and ask the students to supply the endings that can be added. Discuss the way that adding -ed indicates that the action took place in the past. Choose a range of verbs (regular and irregular) from the story and practice adding different inflected endings to each one.

S Comparing different texts by the same author

Janice Marriott has a variety of titles in the grade 5 Orbit collection. The students could read independently from the following titles or choose one for discussion in a literature circle: *The Dog I Share*, *When I Forgot*, *The Curse of Being Pharaoh*, *Splatter*, and *Interrupting the Big Sleep*.

