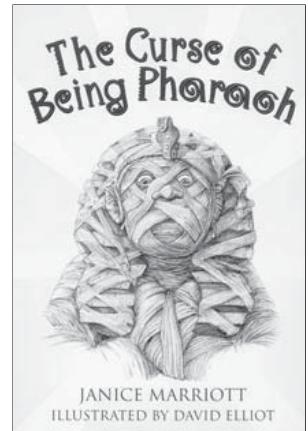


The Curse of Being Pharaoh

by Janice Marriott

illustrated by David Elliot



Book Summary

Mrs. Herrera, the class's regular teacher, is away taking a course. In her absence, the substitute teacher decides that the class program will be different for a while. The students will "live their learning" as they study the life and times of the Pharaohs. This seems to mean general chaos and little discipline – perfect as far as Marty, the class bully, is concerned.

Features of the Book

- The theme of bullying
- First person point of view
- The prologue
- The way the illustrator has interpreted the author's descriptions
- The descriptive writing – *He reminded me of a long, quivering leaf*
- The facts about Egypt and the Pharaohs

Purpose

The Curse of Being Pharaoh can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- drawing on students' prior knowledge;
- making and confirming predictions;
- identifying how setting is important to a story's development;
- recognizing the first person narrative;
- distinguishing between fact and opinion.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- Drawing on students' prior knowledge
- Making and confirming predictions
- Identifying how setting is important to a story's development

Introducing the text

Look at the cover of the book together and discuss the title and illustration. The students will need to understand the meanings of the words "curse" and "Pharaoh." Ask them to discuss what they know about the character on the cover.

- *Where would you expect to find someone like this?*
Tell the students that the Pharaohs were rulers in ancient Egypt. As the students contribute what they know about Egypt, write keywords on a star diagram with the word "Egypt" in the center. Suggestions may include: pyramids, mummies, picture writing (hieroglyphics), tombs, and bandages.
- *Where and when would you expect this story to take place?*

Look at the back cover and read the blurb together.

- *Do you still agree with your predictions? Why have you changed your mind?*
Now read the prologue together.
- *Does this give you any more information about the story? (It tells you how Karen Kwon has changed.)*

Briefly explain the curse of the Pharaohs – the idea that anyone breaking into their tombs in the pyramids would have very bad luck for the rest of their life.

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read chapter 1 independently. When they have finished reading, brainstorm their initial impressions of the main characters.

- Which parts of the story make you think this?

For example, for Karen Kwon, the students might suggest:

- Karen is a quiet girl.
- She was standing at the back of the room.
- She looked away when the narrator talked to her.
- She looks sad and lonely in the pictures.
- She let Marty copy her work.

Ask the students to read chapters 2 and 3 independently.

- As you read, note the words or phrases that tell you that Marty is a bully and a know-it-all.

Using the students' statements, write up a character profile of Marty on the board. Use the incomplete profile to predict what will happen with the "exciting project" that The Leaf is talking about.

- Why is the setting for this story important?
- Would things have happened in the same way if Mrs. Herrera hadn't been away taking a course?

The students can now read the rest of the story independently. As they read, ask them to note any other characteristics of Marty's to add to the character profile. They could also think about the following questions:

- At what stage does Karen realize that Marty has made a big mistake? What was his mistake?
- What does the last sentence on page forty-eight mean? How could Mrs. Herrera know what Marty has learned?

You could discuss the students' responses to these questions after the reading or at another appropriate time.



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 Recognizing the first person narrative

Ask one of the students to read the first page of the story aloud.

- *What do you notice about the way the story is being told? Who is the narrator? (one of the characters in the story)*

Discuss how this page could be rewritten as if someone outside the room were watching what was happening.

- *What would you change? (the pronoun "I" to "he" or the name of the character)*

 Ask the students to choose an incident in the story to write as a newspaper report. They could include the following points:

- a headline to catch the reader's attention;
- a date and a place;
- a lead sentence to encourage the reader to read on (similar to the headline but with more detail);
- the details – who, what, why, how, when;
- accounts from eyewitnesses;
- a conclusion.

The blackline master on pages 66 provides a starting point for this activity.

S Distinguishing between fact and opinion

Ask the students to skim-read the text to find four facts about the ancient Egyptians. They could then visit the school library to check the authenticity of the information in the story. They should be prepared to report their findings to the group.

Discuss the statements that the students have recorded and ask whether they are fact or opinion. Refer them to page 13 of the story, where Marty tells the class what he thinks.

- *Is what Marty says fact or opinion? What has made him say it?*

The students could also find further information about "the curse of the Pharaohs," described on page 20 of the story, and discuss it in terms of fact and opinion.