

The Scary Day

by Jean Bennett

illustrated by Brent Putze



Book Summary

Seth is not enjoying school much. He stares out of the window while he is trying to write a story that his teacher has set the class. But a violent earthquake shakes Seth out of his apathy, and he has to make some fast, effective decisions on what turns out to be the scariest day of his life.

Features of the Book

- The style of the illustrations
- The theme of personal growth
- Information about coping in a disaster
- Vivid descriptions
- Variety of interesting verbs – *faded, tugged, wriggled*
- The use of simile – *like a gunshot; like a giant glass bubble*

Purpose

The Scary Day can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** reviewing students' prior knowledge;
- S** looking at how the author describes the setting of the story;
- S** supporting opinions with evidence from the text;
- S** discussing the use of literary devices such as similes;
- S** reviewing the features of procedural text;
- S** discussing how characters change as a result of events in the text.


The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Reviewing students' prior knowledge
- S** Looking at how the author describes the setting of the story
- S** Supporting opinions with evidence from the text
- S** Discussing the use of literary devices such as similes

Introducing the text

Discuss the cover with the students and ask them to suggest words or phrases that describe the characters' faces and what they might be feeling. Discuss the layout of the cover and the effect that the illustrator has achieved.

- *What could the children be running from? Can you tell from the title? (The title tells the reader that something frightening is happening and that the events in the story probably take place over one day.)*

-  Look at the blurb on the back cover together.
 - *Can you write down four statements about the main character, Seth? (doesn't like school; finds the work hard; hates writing stories; feels tense)*
 - *What do you think the noise is?*
 - *Can you now predict what might be happening on the cover?*

Lead a discussion about different kinds of disasters, such as floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes.

- *What should people do in these situations? How are they supposed to behave?*

Encourage the students to contribute what they know about the subject. You could also read other Orbit chapter books on this theme, such as *Remembering the Big Quake* (grade 5) and *Twisting Up a Storm* (grade 6).

Reading and discussing the text

Look at the title page and ask the students whether this helps them to predict what might happen in the story.

The students can now read chapter 1 independently. As they read, they could think about one or more of the following questions:

- Which words and phrases does the author use to describe the setting?
- How does she show that nothing much is happening and that the day is going slowly?
- Why has she begun the story in this way?
- What makes you think that something unusual is going to happen soon?

When the students have finished reading, discuss their suggestions. Explain that sometimes there is a period of silence before an earthquake and that scientists think that some animals can sense that an earthquake is coming. That's why the author mentions the silence and the animals in the first paragraph.

- What else do you learn about Seth in this chapter?

Add this to the character profile of Seth that was begun earlier.

The students can now read the rest of the story independently. As they read, they could think about the author's use of simile.

- Can you find two places where she describes something by comparing it to something else?

When the students have finished reading, you could review the use of simile using those on pages 6, 7, 9, and 11 as examples.




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 Reviewing the features of procedural text

Ask the students to think about the story and to brainstorm the steps that they should take in the event of a disaster, such as the earthquake in the book. Ask them to support their suggestions with evidence from the text, for example,

- Stay away from windows. (page 7)
- Try not to panic. Stay calm. (pages 9 and 10)
- Keep clear of tall, heavy furniture. (page 9)
- Stay inside. (page 11)
- Listen to the radio. (page 19)
- Stay away from live wires. (page 20)


 The students could record these on a chart or as a notice that can be put on the wall and used as a reference.

 The students can use the blackline master on page 75 to place the steps into the most logical order. They can then number them and give them a heading and a brief introduction.

S Discussing how characters change as a result of events in the text

Review the character profile of Seth that the students created earlier. Ask them to skim-read the text and to find the sentence showing that Seth has changed as a result of the earthquake (page 27).

- How has his character changed?
- Would you expect him to be that kind of person from the statements you found about him earlier?

 The students could now create another list of words or phrases that describe the way that Seth behaved during the disaster. This exercise could lead to a discussion of the students' own experiences.

- Have you ever been in a situation where you needed to take control?
- How did you feel during the event? Did it change you in any way?