

Saving the Park

by Sarah Wilson

illustrated by Peter Lole



Book Summary

Carlos is usually too busy skateboarding to notice what's happening around him until one day he finds out that the council wants to build a new road through the local skateboarding park. A meeting in the community hall gives Carlos and his friends the opportunity to help save the park for everyone to use.

Features of the Book

- First person point of view
- The energy and movement in the illustrations
- The narrative structure – orientation, problem, development, climax, resolution, conclusion
- The development of the main character
- Colloquial vocabulary – *skunk, turtle, wise guy, No time, Awesome*
- Specialized vocabulary – *move, tricky, handplant, boarding, rides the ramp*
- The environmental theme

Purpose

Saving the Park can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** recognizing point of view;
- S** relating ideas in a text to students' own experiences;
- S** exploring the development of characters and the consequences of their actions;
- S** using persuasive language to present an argument;
- S** using research and interview skills.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Recognizing point of view
- S** Relating ideas in a text to students' own experiences
- S** Exploring the development of characters and the consequences of their actions

Introducing the text

Discuss with the students the area surrounding their school. Focus on amenities such as parks, recreation centers, stores, and parking buildings and on the traffic and kinds of housing.

- *How would you describe the area around our school? What things do you like about it?*
- *What areas do you use to play or have fun in?*
- *Are there any problems you would like to see fixed?*
- *Is there anything you could do to help?*

You could also take a tally of the different ways that the students get to school – by bus, bicycle, car, or on foot.

- *Do you ever have any difficulty getting to school? Why? How does that make you feel?*

Discussing these issues will help to activate the students' prior knowledge and experience and make their reading of the text more enjoyable and meaningful.

Look at the cover of the book together.

- *What is this person doing? What do you think the title means?*
- *Can you tell from the illustration where the park might be?*

Now look at the blurb on the back cover together.

- *Can you predict a possible plot for the story?*
- *Does the title make sense now?*

Reading and discussing the text

Look at the first chapter heading and discuss what this chapter will be about. Ask someone to read the first paragraph aloud. This sets the scene by introducing and describing the park from the title of the book.

- *What does the first word tell you about the way this story is going to be told?*

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

- *What did Carlos do that was out of the ordinary for him?*
- *Which sentence tells you that he's starting to think about how other people may be affected?*
- *What do you think he'll do about these feelings.*

When the students have finished reading the chapter, discuss their answers.

The students can now finish reading the rest of the book independently. Suggest a focus, such as:

- *Note how Carlos listens to what other people say and how this changes his ideas.*

As they read, note any difficulties that the students may be having and give assistance where it is needed.

When everyone has finished reading the text, discuss how Carlos changes and the things that bring this change about. Refer the students to the conversations he has with other characters in the book and how these affect his views.




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 Using persuasive language to present an argument

Discuss the points of view on the new road that are expressed in the story and list these next to the characters' names – Mom, Jack, Maria, Miss James, Frankie, and Pete.


 Ask the students to choose one of these characters and to write a paragraph expressing how they feel about the road and whether they think they can do anything to change the council's mind. Suggest that they skim-read the text to locate the relevant conversations and make brief notes before doing their first draft.

When the students have edited and proofread their texts, they could each present their character's point of view to the group. Their aim could be to persuade the others that their character's viewpoint is the most sensible.

S Using research and interview skills

This story could act as a catalyst for the students to do their own research on a related topic. After reading and discussing the issues in the book, ask the students to consider their immediate environment. Brainstorm any problems that they know of, such as traffic, pollution, and lack of amenities. Ask them to choose one of these topics and to create a questionnaire that they can give to friends and neighbors to complete. Help them to:

- keep the questionnaire brief and to the point
- use open-ended questions rather than questions that require yes/no answers
- check with their parents before they give the questionnaire to anyone
- collate and discuss the information they gather
- decide if there is anything they can do to solve the problem.

 The students can use the blackline master on page 74 as a starting point for their questionnaire.