

Splatter

by Janice Marriott

photographs by Sarah Hunter



Book Summary

Darryl joins Greg and Sol for the ride of his life – a quad-bike tour that involves a lot of mud! He knows he’s in for a tough ride when Greg tells him, “Next stop, the water bog!”

Features of the Book

- First person point of view
- Six short chapters
- Colloquial speech – *We size it up; This is the ultimate; I am the total mud man!*
- Specialized vocabulary – *accelerator, hand brake, gears, muffler, handlebar, tank, clutch, exhaust*
- The safety procedures
- Rhetorical questions – *Hey! Where’s Greg taking us!*
- Design features – muddy backgrounds, splatters, tire tracks

Purpose

Splatter can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** looking at root words;
- S** supporting predictions with references to the text;
- S** interpreting and analyzing characters’ feelings, actions, and relationships;
- S** summarizing information in the text;
- S** discussing how design contributes to meaning.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Looking at root words
- S** Supporting predictions with references to the text
- S** Interpreting and analyzing characters’ feelings, actions, and relationships

Introducing the text

Look at the cover of the book together.

- *What feeling does the design of the cover give you?*
- *Can you tell what the book is about?*

Discuss the image of the bike and its rider.

- *Why is this person riding in a place like this? Can you tell where the story is set?*

Discuss how the design of the cover helps to set the tone for a muddy story.

- *How would you say the title? What does it make you think of or feel?*


Look at the blurb on the back cover and read it together.

- *Can you explain what the first paragraph might mean?*

Ask the students to predict what might have happened to make someone say this.

- *What is a quad bike?*

Discuss the students’ suggestions and ask whether they can find clues to its meaning by thinking of other words with the same root (quadrangle, quadruplets).

 The students could make a list of the specialized vocabulary they know about motorbikes to refer to as they read. You could also ask the students what they know about off-road riding.

Reading and discussing the text

Look at the first page of chapter 1 together.

- Does this give you any clues to what the book might be about?
- Why do you think the book begins like this?
- What does this page make you want to do? (It makes you want to read on to find out why the narrator is scared.)

Ask the students to read the rest of chapter 1 independently and to think about the following questions:

- How is the main character feeling at the beginning? Why is he feeling like this?

Discuss the purpose-setting questions and ask the students to back up their ideas with examples from the text.

- Which words or phrases tell you this? (his questions and the way he keeps joking with the others)
- Which sentence tells you that riding a quad is something Darryl has wanted to do for a long time? (My dream is really going to happen. It is happening.)
- How is he feeling near the end of the chapter?
- What surprises him at the end of the chapter? (They have to wear helmets.)

When you think that the students are comfortable with some of the specialized vocabulary, they can read the rest of the book independently.

As they read, the students could consider the following question for later discussion:

- How have the photographs been laid out to give you the feeling of movement?

When they have finished reading, discuss the layering of photographs to suggest a sequence of actions, such as on pages 17, 20, or 25.

- How has this made you feel more involved in the story?

The students might like to compare events in this story with those in the Orbit grade 4 chapter book *The Mountain Bike Challenge*.

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 Summarizing information in the text

Rereading and summarizing the text gives the students an opportunity to practice locating the main points as opposed to supporting details. Ask the students for an oral summary of what happened in one chapter, allowing them to use the photographs as prompts. List the students' ideas for each chapter and then discuss whether they qualify as the main points.

- ✍ When the students have agreed on the main points in each chapter, they could condense the list and summarize it as a time line in two sections – one section for the preparation and one for the ride – using the blackline master on page 76.

S Discussing how design contributes to meaning

This book has been designed to give an exaggerated feeling of “muddiness.” The title design and many of the book's images are in the shape of a splatter of mud.

- Where does this feeling of muddiness begin? (page 15, in the bottom right-hand corner)

- ✍ Ask the students to skim-read the book and to make notes on the background colors in each chapter.

- Why has this been done?
- How does this help you to understand what's happening in the story?
- Which things in the photographs have been copied by using these colors? (the blue of the boys' clothes; the green grass; the brown mud; the blue water)

