

Blackout

by **Rebecca Green**

illustrated by **Mathew Hunkin**



Book Summary

When Lucia moves from a small town to a city, she misses her friends, especially on her birthday. That evening, as she is getting ready to go out with her parents, the power goes off. As her family struggle to cope with the blackout, she finds out that city life isn't at all what she'd imagined.

Features of the Book

- Realistic fiction
- Plot, characters, setting
- Theme of change and adjustment
- First person narration

Purpose

Blackout can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

- S** making inferences;
- S** evaluating a character's point of view;
- S** comparing and contrasting aspects of a story;
- S** discussing the world's dependence on electricity and the effects of disruptions to power supply.

Investigation Tools

- What's the Background? – The 2003 Blackout, page 29
- Step by Step – Electrical Power, pages 30–31
- Digging Deeper – Keeping Safe in a Blackout, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Making inferences
- S** Evaluating a character's point of view

Introducing the text

Give each student a copy of the book and discuss the title, the cover illustration, and the blurb. Ask them to speculate about the plot and the characters. Tell them that as they read this story, they will need to make inferences about the characters and the events. Explain that as they do this, they will be able to notice changes in the main character's point of view.

Reading and discussing the text

Model one of the ways that readers infer meaning by reading aloud the text on page 3, then discuss the inferences you made. For example, you could say:

- *Nothing in the text actually says the girl is moving house, but I can infer that she and the rest of the household are moving. If it were just the girl, the house wouldn't be empty.*
- *The girl is moving slowly – she's even counted the days that she's lived in the house. I remember how I felt when I had to move house. When I add my feelings to how the author describes the girl, I can infer that she isn't happy. The illustration confirms my inference.*

Ask the students to form pairs. Write a guiding question for each chapter (see below) on the board. The students can start to read, pausing at the end of each chapter to discuss their responses to the questions with their partners.

Chapter 1

- *What clues indicate how each member of the family feels about moving?*

Chapter 2

- *What contrasts is Lucia making with her old home, and how is she responding to them?*

Chapter 3

- *How might the events in this chapter change things for Lucia?*

Chapter 4

- *Were you right about Lucia? What might happen next?*

Chapter 5

- *What inferences can you make about the changes in Lucia's point of view?*

Bring the group together to discuss their ideas. Ask the students to share where they made inferences about characters and events, and how Lucia's point of view changed. Ask them to justify their ideas by finding evidence in the text.

The students can read the factual information on pages 29 to 32 to find out more about power and blackouts.


Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson, during later reading sessions as mini-lessons, or as independent activities.

S Evaluating a character's point of view

The students can role-play parts of the story to explore the feelings of the characters. For example, using Chapter 1, they could take on the roles of the father, the mother, and Lucia and have a discussion about moving. Encourage the students to give arguments for and against the move for each character, then switch roles and take a different point of view.

S Comparing and contrasting aspects of a story

 There are contrasts in this story between Lucia's life in the city and country. The students can reread the story to identify these contrasts, then complete the blackline master.

S Discussing the world's dependence on electricity and the effects of disruptions to power supply

Ask the students to discuss the impacts that a blackout might have on their daily lives, including any experiences they have had. Read the information on pages 29 to 32 together, then ask them to investigate an aspect of this topic. For example, they could investigate:

- the reasons for surges in demand for electricity (such as extreme weather)
- the construction of power plants in their area (when they were built, the sources used)
- blackouts in their area (what caused them, what happened).

The students can record their findings.