

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Key to the Treasure

by
Peggy Parish

Book Information

Peggy Parish, Key to the Treasure

Quiz Number: 5226

Dell, 1980

ISBN 0-440-44438-1; LCCN

154 Pages

Book Level: 3.2

Interest Level: MG

While spending the summer with their grandparents, a trio of children decodes secret messages left many years before by their great-great-grandfather.

Topics: Family Life, Great Grandparents; Mysteries, Codes; Mysteries, Treasures; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 1-3; Series, Liza, Bill and Jed Mysteries

Main Characters

Aunt Mary Grandpa's aunt, who wanted a deerskin doll from the collection of Native American items her parents had

Bill Roberts Liza's impatient twin brother, who is always hungry; Bill and Liza are less than a year younger than Jed

Gran Roberts the Roberts children's firm but kind grandmother; she has a story to tell her grandchildren

Grandfather Grandpa's grandfather, who hid clues for his children to find when he went to war; the children's great-great-grandfather

Grandmother Grandpa's grandmother, who believed that work must come before play

Grandpa Roberts the children's grandfather, who tells the story of the sketches

Jack Roberts Grandpa's father, who wanted the leather war shield from his father's collection

Jed Roberts the oldest of the Roberts children; he encourages his siblings to surprise their grandparents with their discovery

Liza Roberts Bill's twin; a young girl who is good at solving puzzles

Mr. Sanders the handyman Grandpa hires to do projects and heavy maintenance around the farm

Old Jane a Native American woman who gave Grandpa's grandfather a feathered bonnet and other items from her culture

Reverend and Mrs. Jenks the kindly minister and the minister's wife of Grandpa and Gran's church

Timothy Sanders a little boy who takes the key to the treasure and buries it in his sandbox

Uncle Frank Grandpa's uncle, who wanted a ferocious-looking mask from his parent's collection

Vocabulary

brittle easily broken

file a steel tool with ridges used to smooth rough material

gibberish speech or language that does not make sense

plundering taking things (usually by force)

shell to remove from a pod

stickler a person who insists that something is done well

Synopsis

Each year, Jed, Bill, and Liza Roberts spend the summer in the country at their grandparents' home. On the first evening, Grandpa agrees once again to tell the story of the picture that hangs above the fireplace. The picture consists of four sketches drawn by the children's great-great-grandfather before he left to fight in the Civil War. The sketches are part of a treasure hunt that Great-Great-Grandfather created for his children. Great-Great-Grandfather's children coveted a leather war shield, deerskin doll, and ferocious-looking mask that Old Jane, a Native American friend, had given him. Since his children loved these items so much, Great-Great-Grandfather made a game of hiding them and leaving the sketches as well as written clues to help the children find the "treasures." The sketches were of a feathered bonnet, a clay pot, a key, and a question mark. Because Great-Great-Grandfather's first clue was accidentally laundered, it was unreadable and the "treasures" with their clues were never found. All that remained were the sketches and the hidden items. Jed, Bill,

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Key to the Treasure

by

Peggy Parish

and Liza are fascinated with the story.

When storm damage prevents the children from building their tree house the next day, the bored children ask their grandmother if they may play with the feathered bonnet. During a fight between Bill and Liza over the bonnet, Liza inadvertently removes a feather from the bonnet. Inside the feather pocket is a piece of brittle paper that tears as the children unfold it. The children carefully reassemble the paper to reveal one of Great-Great-Grandfather's coded messages. The children decide to find the treasures and surprise their grandparents with their discoveries.

Liza discovers that the position of letters in the alphabet is the key to solving the clue puzzle. The decoded message sends the children to the wishing stone, where they dig to find the clay pot pictured in the sketches. Bill breaks the pot and discovers a leather pouch containing another paper clue and a key like the one in the picture.

A visit from the Sanders family interrupts the afternoon. Because the children want to decipher the clue, they pretend that they need a nap. They spend their time upstairs decoding the message, which is in the form of a crossword puzzle. When the clue reveals that the treasure is hidden in a pillar near lilac bushes on the side of the house, the children race to the bushes. A wasp from a nest hidden in the lilacs stings Liza, and the children realize that Grandpa must destroy the nest before they can get to the pillar and its keyhole.

That night, Grandpa burns the wasp nest. The restless children confess to their grandparents that they are on the verge of finding the hidden items. Grandpa and Gran are excited as well. Everyone spends a restless night, however, when Bill discovers that the key is missing. They conclude that Timothy Sanders took the key when he played at the house that afternoon.

The next morning the children and their grandparents retrieve the key from Timothy. Then Liza, Bill, Jed, and their grandparents locate the

"safe" in the pillar. They discover the mask, the doll named Blue Feather, and the leather shield that Great-Great-Grandfather had hidden. When the children realize that their favorite mystery has now been solved, their grandmother hints that she may have another story to tell them.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why is Gran annoyed with the children at the lunch table?

Although Gran initially explains the children's unusual behavior by saying the children are tired, she finally loses her patience with them when they begin to giggle uncontrollably. Since Gran believes that manners are important, she becomes annoyed when the children do not stop giggling after she reminds them that they are at the table. When the children continue to giggle after Grandpa asks them to share more information about their encounter with Old Honker, Bill accidentally spouts milk all over the table. Both grandparents respond to this flagrantly rude behavior with total silence.

Literary Analysis

How do the Roberts children make the best of situations like a rainy day?

The Roberts children like to work and play together; they also like to stay busy. The first night, they listen to Grandpa's stories. The next day, since lightning damaged the tree they were going to use for their tree house, they look for other means to entertain themselves until Mr. Sanders trims the tree. They look for scrap lumber they can use when the tree is safe again. When rain halts their lumber search, they help Gran and play games together. Then, when they discover the clue in the feather bonnet, they work together to locate the treasures.

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Key to the Treasure

by

Peggy Parish

Inferential Comprehension

Why are Liza, Bill, and Jed fascinated with the picture containing the four sketches?

The four sketches represent an unsolved mystery, something that often piques children's interests. In addition, the mystery involves family members and takes place at Grandpa and Grandma Roberts' home. Grandpa also tells the story in a very appealing way, and the story has become almost a tradition for the children when they visit each summer. Finally, the children are bored because of the rain, so they are looking for something to fill their time.

Constructing Meaning

The pillar of Grandpa and Gran's house is actually a "time capsule" that stores items from a different culture and time period. What are some items that could be included in a time capsule from the culture and time in which you live?

Since students have a variety of interests and possibly different ethnic backgrounds, their answers will probably vary. Some students may suggest items like televisions, compact disc players, books, and movies, while others might wish to include sports items, like professional sport cards, jerseys, etc. Students may also suggest certain food items, like pizza, soda, or a favorite candy or snack. Others may mention items that are specific to their individual ethnic cultures.

Teachable Skills

Responding to Literature When the storm knocks out the electricity in Grandpa and Gran's house, the grandparents are prepared. For example, Grandpa lights oil lamps that are always kept filled with oil, and he starts a fire in the fireplace, which provides heat against the chill of the night. Also, Grandpa entertains the children with a story. Today's households also need to be prepared for natural emergencies like rainstorms, tornadoes, hurricanes, and blizzards. Essential items such as food, water, heat, and shelter must be provided despite the weather. Many

municipalities and power companies distribute brochures that help people prepare for emergencies. Obtain an emergency brochure and discuss it with the class. Have students use what they have learned from the brochure to assess their abilities to meet emergencies. Ask students to list at least three ways in which their homes are either prepared or in need of emergency planning. Students can later share these observations with their families.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Old Jane teaches the children's great-great-grandfather many things about the Native American culture. Assign the students to learn about the native group that first inhabited their area before Europeans settled there. Students should find out about the group's way of life: their food, their shelter, their clothing, and their rituals and ceremonies. They can then choose one item from this culture and reproduce it. Perhaps they can prepare a food item, construct a model of a home, construct a piece of clothing, make a piece of pottery or a basket, or make a drum or toy. The items should be explained before being displayed around the classroom.

Recognizing Details Solving puzzles helps people to think creatively as well as have fun. Designing puzzles also requires creative thinking. Have students construct puzzles for other students to solve. They can develop codes, crossword puzzles, hidden word puzzles, or other kinds of puzzles. For added fun, students could bring some unwanted toy or knick-knack from home and hide it someplace in the classroom or school. The puzzle they create could then provide clues leading to the hidden object.

Describing Actions or Events Jed is attacked by a goose that is defending its territory. Many animals are territorial and will attack if an intruder gets too close to its nest or home. Have each student choose an animal and learn about its habitat and habits. How does the animal protect itself against intruders in its territory? How should a human behave when confronted by this animal? Have students arrange their information on posters and give oral presentations to the

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for
Key to the Treasure
by
Peggy Parish

class.