Stone Fox Lesson Plan | Scholastic.com

Summary

Little Willy lives with his Grandfather on a potato farm near Jackson, Wyoming. When Grandfather falls into a deep depression over his inability to pay the land taxes, Willy decides to help out by entering his dog Searchlight in the National Dogsled Race, where the first, prize is $500. Willy's major opponent is the Native American, Stone Fox who races his team of Malamutes each year and inevitably wins, using the prize money to buy back land he feels the white settlers have stolen from his people. The plucky Searchlight, neck and neck with Stone Fox's team, dies of exhaustion just before he reaches the finish line. Stone Fox stops his own team and the others as well so that Willy can carry the body of his gallant dog across the finish line and win.

Preparation

Point out the city of Jackson, Wyoming, and the Teton Mountains on a topographical map. Invite students to indicate on the map the mountain range of which the Tetons are a part (the Rocky Mountains) and to discuss what they know about the mountain terrain and climate. Show the book cover and preview some of the illustrations so that students can check and verify their ideas.

As You Read

Discuss the many decisions Willy has to make and invite students to tell why he chose certain actions and rejected others. For example, why did Willy choose to take care of his Grandfather himself rather than let Mrs. Peacock care for him? Why did Willy decide to work to keep the farm instead of selling it? How did Willy decide to harvest the potatoes when he could not rent horses to pull the plow? Invite students to tell how Willy and his grandfather feel about the land and how each of Willy's decisions is based on his ultimate goal: to keep the land so that his grandfather will take heart and get well.

At the conclusion, students can respond via a Discussion Web to the problems raised when Willy wins the race at the expense of Searchlight's life. Copy the Discussion Web below on the chalkboard and invite students to discuss the issues and fill out the web. Invite students to work as partners.

Discussion: "The Race" in *Stone Fox*

Did Willy deserve to win the race? List the reasons.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
NO	YES

Extending Geography

Mapping the Mountains

Six cooperative learning groups can first research the six chief ranges of the Rockies, then contribute their findings to a bulletin board which describes the ranges in pictures and captions.

Introduce the activity by explaining that the Rockies are the largest mountain system in North America. The chain is more than 3000 miles long, and about 350 miles wide in some places. (You may wish to point out that in the United States the Rockies form the Continental Divide: rivers flow from the western slopes to the Pacific Ocean, and from the eastern slopes to the Atlantic.) Write the following list on the chalkboard and invite volunteers to identify the ranges on a topographical map as you read the list:

- Southern Rockies: from the Sangre de Cristo range in New Mexico to central Colorado.
- Middle Rockies: from northwestern Colorado and northern Utah to the upper Yellowstone River in Montana.
- Northern Rockies: from southern Idaho to the border between the U.S. and Canada.
- Canadian Rockies: from the Canadian border north through British Columbia and Alberta.
- Selwyn Mountains: northward beyond the Liard River in northern Canada
- Brooks Range: across northern Alaska to north of the Arctic Circle.

Suggest that each cooperative learning group choose one of the six ranges for its project. Group assignments can include the following: (1.) using topographical maps to find the highest peaks in the chain; (2.) using political maps to find major cities in the chain; (3.) researching to find national parks and sites of historical interest in the chain; (4.) drawing pictures to illustrate the data from 1, 2, and 3; (5.) writing brief captions to go with the pictures.

Groups can share their work with the class by contributing it to a *Rocky Mountains* bulletin board. Under that head, display a construction paper silhouette of the Rockies from north to south. Working through the six ranges from south to north, groups can appoint spokespersons to attach the pictures and labels to either side of the silhouette, telling the class about each feature as they do so.

Invite students to use the display: to find settings for telling their own stories modeled on *Stone Fox*; for writing travel brochures; for planning “dream” vacations; for investigating further to find out about and report to the class about wildlife in each chain; for making up arithmetic word problems based on the comparative heights of mountains in the Rockies; to add information to the display that tells how the Rockies were formed geologically.

Making Connections

Literature/Writing: *What If ... Stories*

Invite students to write paragraphs telling what might have happened if various events had taken a different turn, or if characters had made other choices. Introduce the activity by writing some examples on the chalkboard, then invite students to make up “what if's ...” of their own. Add their suggestions to the board list. Examples are: What if the banker had not let Willy withdraw his saving from the bank? What if Stone Fox had not let Willy win? What if Searchlight had not died? What if Grandfather decided to sell the farm? Suggest that students choose one of these “if's” or another one to develop in their paragraphs and

to illustrate with a drawing. After students have shared their work with the class, put the paragraphs and pictures in a folder on a reading table for students to read and discuss with a partner.

Math:*Book Quiz*

Invite interested students to make up word problems loosely based on the story materials, for example: the number of potatoes Willy and Searchlight can plow in certain periods of time; the amount of money Willy and Grandfather can save or earn; the distance a Malamute and Searchlight can pull a sled in a certain number of minutes. You might also give students access to a road map of Wyoming and adjoining states and invite them to make up problems that involve using the distance scale on the map or the labels that indicate the altitudes of landforms. Ask students to present their word problems to the class, and encourage the problem-solvers to explain how they arrived at their answers. Then put the word problems in a folder in the math center for students to solve on their own.

- Part of Collection:

  Native American Heritage

- Subjects:

  Cause and Effect, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Plot, Character, Setting, Story Elements, Reading Response, Research Skills, Logic and Problem Solving, Math through Literature, Measurement, Word Problems, Landforms, Farm and Ranch Life, Geography and Map Skills, Landforms and Topography, Maps and Globes

- Skills:

  Cause and Effect, Drawing Conclusions, Making Inferences, Plot, Character and Setting, Maps, Research Skills