

William and Mary

Navigator

A novel study guide for
Who Really Killed Cock
Robin?

by
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Introduction

This Navigator is a collection of questions and activities intended to support group or independent study of the novel *Who Really Killed Cock Robin?* by Jean Craighead George. It is one of a series of Navigators developed by the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary as a language arts resource for teachers and students.

Novel studies should encourage advanced readers to develop their skills at analyzing and interpreting literature through structured questions and activities that highlight themes and concepts, literary elements, and real world connections contained within the books. In addition, novel studies are opportunities for students to develop their own vocabulary and writing skills by exploring and emulating the language and style used by authors.

What are the goals of the Navigator?

The Navigator addresses the following learning goals:

- To develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature.
- To develop understanding of selected literary themes.
- To develop linguistic competency through vocabulary and language study.
- To develop skills in written and oral communication.
- To develop higher level thinking and reasoning skills in language arts.
- To develop research skills.

Who is the audience for the Navigator?

This Navigator is intended for readers of *Who Really Killed Cock Robin?* by Jean Craighead George, a novel appropriate for strong readers in the elementary grades. This novel meets many of the criteria identified by Baskin and Harris (1980) for books for gifted readers, including *rich, varied language; open-endedness, with capacity to inspire contemplative behavior; complexity; and role models*. The novel also meets criteria identified by Miller-Lachman (1992) as considerations for multicultural literature, *including general accuracy, avoidance of stereotypes; integration of cultural information; balance; and multidimensionality*.

How should the Navigator be used?

The Navigator may be used as an instructional tool by a teacher or as an independent study guide by a student or group of students. The central intent is for teachers to use the Navigator to support a novel study with a group of students, selecting questions and activities to assign as desired, given the context. However, teachers may also choose to make the Navigator available to students at a learning center, with expectations specified for students as to which items they should complete.

The Navigator incorporates several types of questions related to the novel. Some of these, identified as “while you read” questions, are specifically intended to be used for reflection and prediction as students progress through the novel. Other questions are intended for response after the reader has completed the novel, while still others may be answered either during or after reading. All of the questions on pages ___ - ___ of the Navigator may be used for writing and/or discussion.

Additional activities beyond the discussion and reflection questions appear on pages ___ - ___ of the Navigator. Some of these activities support further development of the language arts skills identified in the goals, while others provide interdisciplinary connections and research applications.

What are the prerequisites for students using the Navigator?

Students using the Navigator should be able to complete the novel itself independently and should be familiar with the literary and reasoning terms utilized in questions. In addition, students will be asked to complete activities that utilize several specific teaching/learning models: the **Literature Web**, the **Hamburger Model for Persuasive Writing**, and the **Vocabulary Web**. If these terms and models are new to students, teachers may wish to conduct mini-lessons on them either prior to or during use of the Navigator. Some guidance for using the teaching models is provided below.

The Literature Web

The Literature Web is a model designed to guide interpretation of a literature selection by encouraging a reader to connect personal response with particular elements of the text. The web may be completed independently and/or as a tool for discussion. Recommended use is to have students complete the web independently and then share ideas in a small group, followed by a teacher-facilitated debriefing. The web has five components:

- **Key Words:** interesting, unfamiliar, striking, or particularly important words and phrases contained within the text
- **Feelings:** the reader's feelings, with discussion of specific text details inspiring them; the characters' feelings; and the feelings the reader infers the author intended to inspire
- **Ideas:** major themes and main ideas of the text; key concepts
- **Images and Symbols:** notable sensory images in the text, "pictures" in they reader's mind and the text that inspired them, concrete symbols for abstract ideas
- **Structure:** the form and structure of the writing and how they contribute to meaning; may identify such features as use of unusual time sequence in narrative, such as flashbacks, use of voice, use of figurative language, etc.; style of writing

The Hamburger Model for Persuasive Writing

The Hamburger Model uses the familiar metaphor of a sandwich to help students construct a paragraph or essay. Students begin by stating their point of view on the issue in question (the top bun). They then provide reasons, or evidence, to support their claim; they should try to incorporate at least three supportive reasons (the "patties"). Elaboration on the reasons provides additional detail (the "fixings"). A concluding sentence or paragraph wraps up the sandwich (the bottom bun).

The Vocabulary Web

The Vocabulary Web is a tool for exploring words in depth. It asks students to investigate a single word in detail, finding its definition, synonyms and antonyms, and etymological information. With this information, students then identify "word families," or other words using the same meaning-based stems as the original word; and they provide an example of the word, which may be a sentence or analogy using the word, a visual or dramatic representation, or another creative form.

In addition to the models discussed here, Navigator developers also used Paul's (1992) Elements of Reasoning in preparing questions and activities. This model for critical thinking emphasizes the following eight elements: *issue, purpose, point of view, assumptions, concepts, evidence, inferences, and implications or consequences*. Teachers may wish to introduce these terms to students, using a familiar issue such as something being discussed in the school or community; teachers should then encourage the use of the terms and the model in approaching problems and issues.

The Navigator also contains research assignments that are issue-based as well as discussion questions about the novel. Students should be encouraged to explore multiple points of view and use human and organizational as well as print resources in their investigations of these real-world issues.

Several resources are listed at the end of the Navigator that may be useful to students and teachers in exploring these models further.

How long does the Navigator take?

Duration of study depends on teacher preference and number of activities and questions assigned.

How does the Navigator address standards for language arts?

The Navigator was designed with an eye to addressing key standards for language arts identified by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996) as well as standards from several state-level education departments. Specifically, the Navigator reflects standards in the following areas:

Standards Emphases	Navigator
- Use of strategies to understand, interpret and evaluate text	- Provides the student with an organized understanding and critical analysis
- Use of writing strategies and writing process elements	- Provides writing prompts, a writing model, and emphasis on steps of the writing process
- Use of spoken and written language for particular audiences and to accomplish particular purposes	- Incorporates activities for writing and speaking that emphasize persuasive, reflective, information, and narrative communication
- Knowledge of vocabulary, language structure, and language conventions and analysis of how they are demonstrated in text	- Encourages in-depth word study of advanced vocabulary, including emphasis on etymology and usage of words
- Research on issues and areas of interest, with emphasis on utilizing a variety of technological and informational resources to gather data, interpret results, and communicate findings	- Provides several issue-based research assignments for students, emphasizing data collection from print, non-print, and human resources; analysis and synthesis of data; and written and oral communication of findings
- Participation as members of literacy communities	- Encourages discussion within and beyond the classroom about the specified text and invites similar exploration of other texts
- Emphasis on reading a wide range of literature selections to build understanding of the human experience	- Encourages in-depth study of the specified text as well as comparisons to other selected works; suggests specific titles for further reading

How should the Navigator activities be assigned?

Teachers should specify expectations for students around number and type of activities and questions to be completed, as well as expectations for quality of work. Teachers may choose to assign Navigator questions and activities using a combination of required and optional items. Several sample organizations of assignments appear below.

Sample 1 (Teacher-led emphasis):

- Teacher-led discussion of higher-level questions; 1-3 questions assigned for journal response.
- Required assignments: Literature Web, persuasive essay OR book review, one Vocabulary Web, one research assignment

- Choice assignments: student choice of THREE remaining activities
- Oral presentation of one completed piece

Sample 2 (Small-group emphasis):

- Small-group discussion of higher-level questions, with 4-5 questions completed in writing for teacher review
- *Group* assignments: Character detective OR concept map, two Vocabulary Webs, one research assignment with group presentation
- *Individual* assignments: Literature Web, persuasive essay OR book review, student choice of TWO remaining activities

Sample 3 (Individual emphasis):

- Written responses to student choice of 2-3 discussion questions per category
- Required assignments: one research assignment; student choice of THREE additional activities, of which one must be a completed writing piece; oral presentation of one assignment

How should the Navigator activities be assessed?

Teachers should assess student progress based on the quality of individual products and achievement toward the goals of the Navigator. Decisions around which activities to require students to complete should be based on how the selected activities support multiple learning goals.

Question responses should be assessed based on demonstration of insight and ability to use text to support inferences. Writing activities should be assessed based on clarity and insight, and may also be assessed for writing style and mechanics as desired. Oral presentations of completed work should be assessed based on coherence, content, and clarity of the presentation. Teachers may provide rubrics for students related to the required assignments or work with students to develop rubrics for assessment.

Completed Navigator activities should be collected into a folder for assessment, and final assessment may include self-evaluation by the student.

The chart on the following page demonstrates how the Navigator activities support the identified goals:

Alignment of Assignments and Activities to Navigator Goals

	Analysis/Interpretation Skills	Linguistic Competency	Written/ Oral Communication	Literary Themes	Thinking/ Reasoning Skills	Research Skills
Discussion/Writing Questions	X			X	X	
Literature Web	X					X
Vertebrate/Invertebrate Report	X		X		X	X
Recipe for an Ecosystem			X		X	X
Systems Art	X				X	
Habitat journal			X		X	X
Persuasive Essay (EPA)			X		X	X

What additional resources are required to use the Navigator?

Most of the activities in the Navigator require only the novel itself and regular classroom supplies. Vocabulary activities will require the use of a good dictionary, including etymological information on words. Recommended dictionaries are *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* and the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. Interdisciplinary and research activities may require additional supplies and access to library and Internet resources. The *Guide to Teaching a Language Arts Curriculum for High-Ability Learners* (Center for Gifted Education, 1998) provides guidance in the use of the literature, persuasive writing, and vocabulary study models used in the Navigator as well as other guidelines for language arts with high-ability populations.

A listing of additional resources and suggestions for further reading appears at the end of the Navigator.

NOTE: Page numbers used in the Navigator refer to the Harper-Trophy edition of the text, ISBN: 0-06—21981-5.

Technological Connections

Several opportunities for technological connections and development of technical skills are incorporated in the Navigator. Based on the resources available in your classroom or media center, consider the following uses of technology:

- Access to the Internet for research projects. Key web sites are listed in the resources section.
- Use of word processing and/or publishing software for writing assignments.
- Use of presentation software for presenting research findings and completed activities.
- Use of *Inspiration* software or similar for creation of concept maps.

Synopsis

Who Really Killed Cock Robin? takes place in the town of Saddleboro. When Cock Robin, the town mascot, sickens and dies, Tony Ididoro is resolved to find the culprit. His school mate, Mary Alice is just as determined to prove that her father, a local factory owner, is not contributing to the decline of the environment. While Tony uses scientific clues to track Cock Robin's killer, Mary Alice tends to Cock Robin's surviving offspring, Saddle. Both children are instrumental in heightening the town's awareness of environmental safety, and the population learns that it takes a community, working together, to secure a healthy environment.

Higher-Level Questions for Discussion and Writing

While You Read...

- Why did the major accuse Mary Alice's father of killing Cock Robin? Was the major justified in making this accusation? Support your answer using the text.
- Do you think it is strange that the major depends on Tony for information about the robins? What else could the major do to obtain his information? Do you think he will listen to Tony's advice as the story progresses? Why or why not?
- What can you infer about the relationship between Tony and his brother, Izzy? How did you arrive at this conclusion?

- Tony notices a missing link in the food chain (p. 21). How do you think this will affect the outcome of the story?
- Why is Tony excited about finding high levels of chlorinated hydrocarbon in the Missatonic River (p. 71)? Do you think his discovering will have an impact on the outcome of the story, or is it a red herring? Support your answer with details from the story.
- Why does Mary Alice accuse the major of Cock Robin's death? Was she justified in her accusation? Did she act scientifically, or did she have a hidden agenda? How do you know?
- What do you think will happen when the boys secretly mark the major's lawn with the yellow dye? What makes you think so?
- Were you surprised at the outcome of the story or were you disappointed at the ending? Why did Jean Craighead George end her story in this manner? What, if anything, was she trying to say?

Exploring the Story

- Tony and Mary Alice find many clues about Cock Robin's death throughout the course of the story. Scan the text and make a list of clues they find. Are these all legitimate clues, or does George include red herrings, things that draw attention away from the central issue, in her writing? Support your answer.
- On page 117, Rob makes the statement that, "We are an intelligent beast." Do you think the citizens of Saddleboro are intelligent beasts? Why do you think so? Do you think people as a whole are intelligent beasts? Why?
- Could this story have taken place in an urban setting? What kinds of things would have to change in order for the story to be set in a city?
- Why does the author choose to begin the story with Cock Robin's death? Do you think it would be more or less effective to have allowed Cock Robin to live through the first chapter of the story? Why?

Meeting the Characters

- Who do you think is a more effective scientist, Tony or Mary Alice? Why do you think so? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
- If the major was running for reelection, would you vote for him? Why or why not? What kinds of things does the text reveal about his character?
- Does the fact that Tony and Mary Alice share relatives who were instrumental in founding the town's industry help or hurt their relationship? How can you tell?
- What does Mary Alice find out about herself as the story progresses? Does she find it difficult to live with what she learns, or do you think that all children eventually learn the same thing?
- What do you think will happen to Tony and Mary Alice ten years after the end of the story? Upon what do you base your ideas?

Understanding the Ideas

- After reading *Who Really Killed Cock Robin?*, what statement can you make about the importance of keeping good data? How did you come to this conclusion?
- What is the importance of community? In what ways is the community of Saddleboro unique?
- How problematic is it when one part of a system fails? Does it matter more if a large component of a system fails more than a small one? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
- Is it possible for children to impact a community in the way that Tony and Mary Alice affected Saddleboro? Or are children virtually powerless in today's society? How do you know?

Connecting to You

- Have you ever experienced the death of a pet? How did this affect you and your family? What kinds of things did you do to recover from the death?
- In what kinds of community service projects have you been involved? Did they make a significant difference to your community? Were you pleased with the outcome of your efforts? Explain.
- Do you have an interest like science that you are able to implement in your everyday life the way that Tony uses science to help him find Cock Robin's killer? Share your interest and experiences with your classmates or study group.

Differentiated Activities for Gifted Learners

- Complete a Literature Web about the novel. Draw the web below on your paper, and fill in responses to each of the bubbles, using the questions as a guide:

Key Words: What were some words and phrases in the novel that were especially interesting or important?

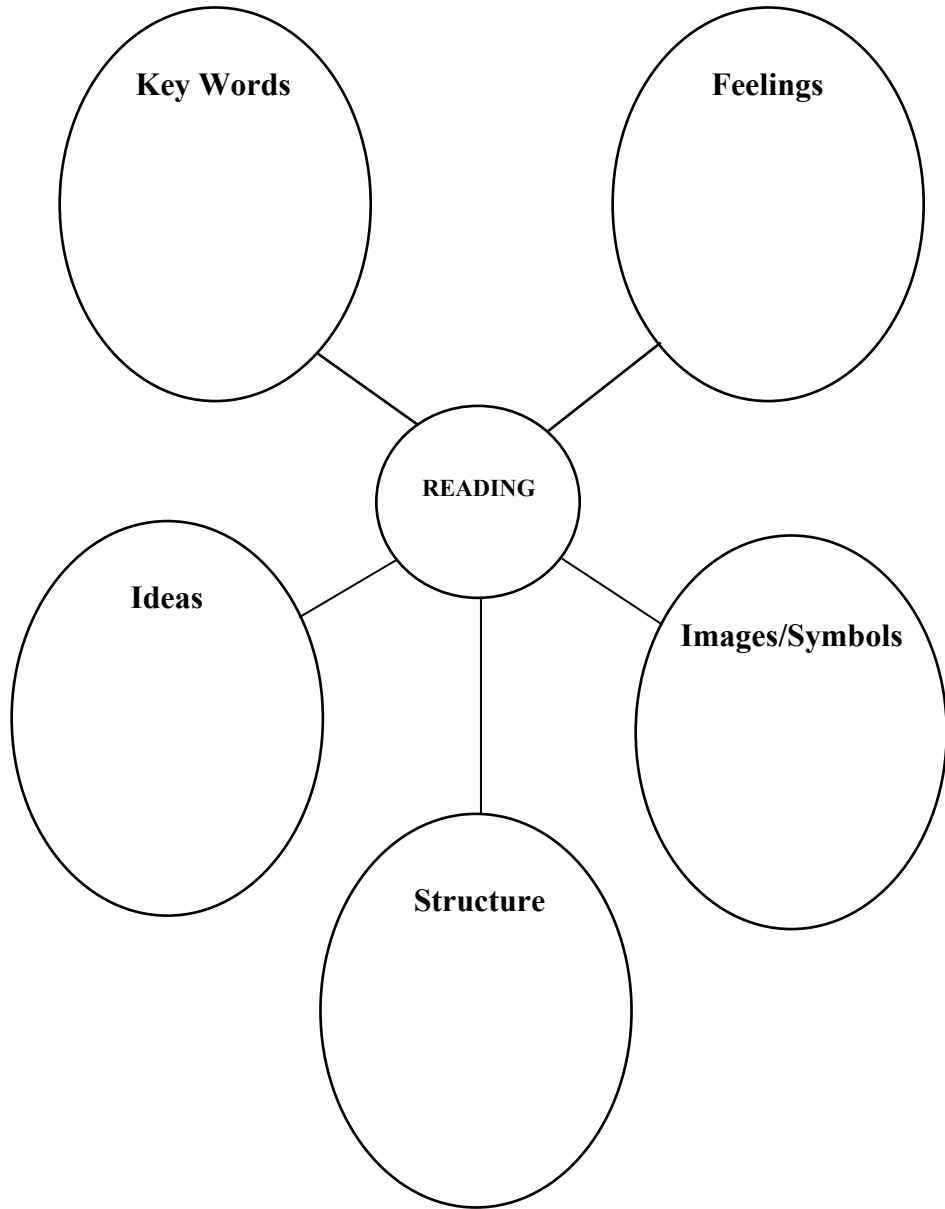
Feelings: What feelings did you have reading this novel? What feelings did the characters have? How were those feelings expressed?

Ideas: What was the main idea or theme of the novel? What other major ideas and concepts were important? What message was the author trying to give about those ideas?

Images/Symbols: How did the author use description and imagery in the novel? What sensory images came to your mind? How did the author use symbols?

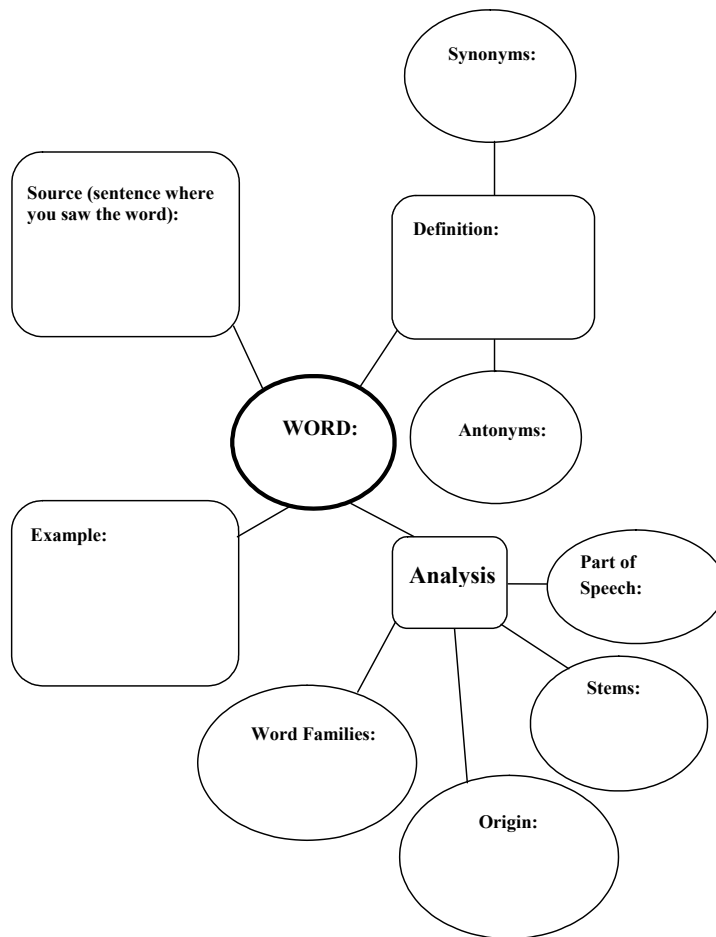
Structure: What type of writing was this? What literary and style elements did the author use? How did the structure of the writing contribute to the meaning of the novel?

LITERATURE WEB



VOCABULARY WEB

Use the Vocabulary Web as a guide to help you organize your responses to the following activity.



- Do a “word study” of one or more of the vocabulary words from the novel (listed below). Find out the definition of the word, synonyms and antonyms, and word stems and origin. Then find at least three other words that use one or more of your word’s stems, and create an example to explain your word (a sentence, an analogy, a visual representation, etc.). Use the Vocabulary Web to organize your responses.

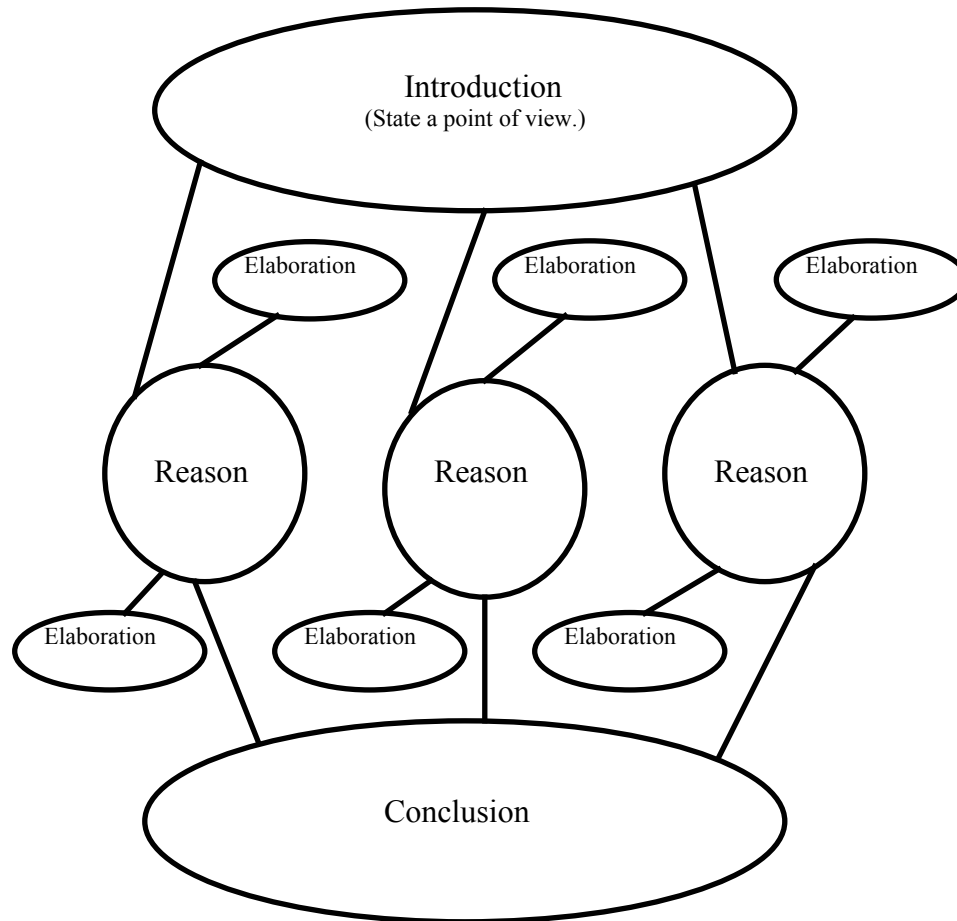
aniline (p. 8)	preening (p. 4)	parochial (p.42)
fledglings (p.4)	illusion (-.5)	baffled (p.56)
providence (p. 6)	dynamic (p.7)	immaculate (p. 70)
scrutiny (p.11)	exuberant (p.12)	pertinent (p. 72)
clutch (p.13)	brood (p.14)	pensively (p. 84)
interlude (p.14)	spinster (p.16)	copepods (p. 92)
propaganda (p.17)	conservationist (p.18)	prevailing (p. 116)
haughtily (p.27)	usurp (p.27)	sleuth (p.175)
harbingers (p.27)	undulating (p.39)	patronizing (p.47)
obscured (p.42)	boccie (p.65)	hydrocarbon (p. 71)

histochemist (p. 78)	nil (p. 92)	noxious (p. 134)
oxidized (p. 91)		

- Choose and adopt a habitat for one week. Visit the habitat on a daily basis and record your observations in a habitat journal. You may want to include some sketches of what you see as well as record the number of animals, insects, and plant life you encounter. Remember to respect the habitat and leave it just as you found it. At the end of the week, examine your journal. As a final entry, determine at least three things you can do to improve the habitat. Write a complete journal entry explaining how you will bring at least two of your three ideas to fruition. Include a list of all resources you might need in order to make fulfill your goals.

THE HAMBURGER MODEL FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING

Use the Hamburger Model as a guide to help you organize your responses to the following activity.



- Research the origins of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Why and when was this organization formed? What is their mission? Are they fulfilling the mission in today's political, economic, and ecological climate? Collect as much information on the EPA as you can then write a persuasive essay defending or rejecting the effectiveness of the EPA. Use the Hamburger Model for Persuasive Writing to help you organize your thoughts. Be prepared to present your arguments to your classmates or other appropriate audience. You may want to use presentation software to help guide your oral presentation.
- Investigate information related to pollution and pesticides found in ordinary materials that might be used in the yard or garden. Use the web sites listed in the resource section to help you with gather information. Design an experiment using the steps of the scientific method to determine if your yard or garden is contributing to polluting the environment. Conduct the experiment, observing and recording data carefully. Create a chart or graph of the data that shows the results of your experiment. Next, design a system whereby you will clean up your yard or garden by a predetermined percentage.

Implement your plan as soon as possible and record the results. Project how long it will take your plan to have a significant impact on the wider environment. You may wish to contact local experts to help you with this portion of your work. Display the results of your work on a tri-fold board or presentation software program and inform your class or other appropriate audience of your progress.

Interdisciplinary and Research Connections

- Consider the different systems in which you live. Such systems begin with your family and extend outward to the community and beyond. Make a list of all of the systems in which you belong. You should be able to list a minimum of five systems. Choose an art medium at which you feel particularly adept. This could be painting, sculpture, model-magic, or collage. Using the medium and a minimum of words, depict your place in the scheme of these systems. Are you a large or a small part of them? Are you at the center or on the periphery? You may want to make several sketches before you begin your final work. Your final product should be creative but your place in systems should be clear to the viewer.
- Choose an ecosystem about which you are particularly interested. Research information on what makes the ecosystem particularly healthy. Record your notes using a web, chart, or other graphic organizer. Write a recipe for a healthy ecosystem considering all of the components you discovered during your research. Consider your recipe. What would it take to bring all of the ingredients together? Design an advertisement to encourage others to contribute to making it possible to prepare the recipe.
- Choose a vertebrate or invertebrate in which you are particularly interested. Research the habitat and behavior of this animal. If possible, visit a zoo or a pet shop and observe this animal. Gather as much data as you can and use a chart or a web to organize your information. Now assume that this animal has undergone a monumental change: if it was a vertebrate, it is now an invertebrate. The opposite is also true. Consider the animal in this new way. What affect will the change have on the animal, its habitat, its place in the food chain, its entire system? Prepare a written report to present to your class along with a model of the animal in both its original and its changed form. Be sure to include information about any adaptations your creature would have to make to survive in its new form.
- Examine the local newspaper and talk to community leaders about areas of concern in your local community. Choose one of these issues to research in depth. Hold a community or town meeting in which you present your findings.

Resources

Teacher resources

- Baskin, B. H., & Harris, K. H. (1980). *Books for the gifted child*. New York: Bowker.
- Boyce, L. N. (1997). *A guide to teaching research skills and strategies in grades 4-12*. Williamsburg, VA: Center for Gifted Education.
- Center for Gifted Education. (1998). *Guide to teaching a language arts curriculum for high-ability learners*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association. (1996). *Standards of learning for the English language arts*. Urbana, IL: Author.

- Paul, R. (1992). *Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world*.
Rohnert Park, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- VanTassel-Baska, J., & Little, C.A. (Eds.). (2003). *Content-based curriculum for high-ability learners*.
Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

For further reading – some other books or authors you might enjoy

Other books by Jean Craighead George

My Side of the Mountain
The Case of the Missing Cutthroats
The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo
There's an Owl in the Shower

For further reading – some other books or authors you might enjoy

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen
Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe by
Brother Eagle, Sister Sky paintings by Susan Jeffers
Westlandia by

Useful web sites

<http://www.epa.gov/kids/> (environmentally conscious activities for children)
<http://twp.dover.nj.us/barnegat.htm> (how to have a pollution free lawn)
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/home.htm> (Institute of Environmental Health Sciences)
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/eeek> (Environmental Education for kids, online magazine for readers in Grades 4-8, very current issues)
http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/kids_e.html (Canadian site that encourages children to express their environmental ideas through art)
<http://www.kidsface.org/> (Home page for Kids For a Clean Environment: F.A.C.E.)
<http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/action/way04.html> (Ideas about things children have done to help the environment)
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/child/ochheykids.html> (Facts about toxic chemicals and the environment)
<http://www.healthwindows.org/> (Health issues children face)