



Eagle Song

By Joseph Bruchac

When Danny Bigtree's parents move from the Mohawk reservation to Brooklyn, New York, in search of better job opportunities, Danny finds it difficult to fit in with his new classmates. Then his father shares an Iroquois legend that helps Danny stand up for himself and find friendship.

Features of This Text

Challenging Features

- Native American names and vocabulary, such as Aionwahta and She':kon
- Information about a Native American culture
- Sophisticated story with minimal picture support

Focus for Instruction

Reading Skill: Understand Plot and Mood

Word Study Mini-lesson: Blended Words

Vocabulary

blueprints (p. 70)	hesitated (p. 10)
casual (p. 55)	longhouses (p. 8)
clan (p. 19)	model (p. 24)
comfort (p. 27)	motioned (p. 55)
detectors (p. 52)	signaled (p. 71)
grazed (p. 71)	tardy (p. 53)
grief (p. 29)	transform (p. 35)

Additional Activities

- **Genre:** Realistic Fiction
- **Writing:** Write a Letter



Use this book to inform instruction in the following areas:

- Teach student how to identify story elements
- Provide opportunities to identify and discuss a significant message or event in a story



Shared Reading Connections:

- Unit 4, Week 1 (pp. 166–175)
- Unit 4, Week 3 (pp. 186–195)

Guiding the Reading

Day 1

(pp. 7–25)

In This Section When Danny Bigtree goes to his new school in Brooklyn, New York, his new classmates make fun of his Indian heritage. Finally, Danny shares his frustration about school with his father.

Before Reading

Focus Attention

- Ask students what they think the title may mean. Have them page through the book to preview the chapter titles. Note that the first two chapter titles come from the Mohawk language. Encourage students to use the glossary to check the pronunciation and meaning of the Native American terms in the text.
- Discuss the illustration on the cover. Ask who the boy might be, and what the title may have to do with the events in the story. Have them use their predictions to set a purpose for reading.

Vocabulary

- Say: *He hesitated before agreeing to take on the big job.* Ask what *hesitated* (p. 10) means. (“held back because one felt uncertain”) Ask volunteers to share a time they may have hesitated before doing or saying something.

Other Words to Know

- **clan** (p. 19): “a group of related families”
- **longhouses** (p. 8) “large, rectangular dwellings of the Iroquois”
- **model** (p. 24): “an example”

Understand Plot and Mood

Explain that authors use descriptive words to create a mood or feeling in a story that adds to the plot. Plot is the series of events that give the story a beginning, a middle, and an ending. To recognize plot, good readers first identify the problem the main character faces. Next they look to see how the character tries to solve the problem. Finally, they identify the events that lead to a solution of the problem. Identifying the plot of the story and the mood that the author creates helps students better understand what they

read. Read aloud the first three paragraphs on pages 7–8, and use the information on these pages to model understanding plot and mood:

I can already identify Danny Bigtree’s problem. The other kids in his neighborhood make fun of him. They call him “Chief” and ask him if he’s going home to his teepee. The details the author chooses to describe Danny’s walk home create the mood of loneliness. The author writes that “the November wind was cold against [Danny’s] face.” Danny thinks of cutting his hair, knowing that “The other boys would still say things like that.” As I read, I will look for how Danny tries to solve his problem, and for details that create mood.

Distribute the back cover reproducible. As students read, have them use the reproducible to record information about the story, including what the main character does to solve his problem, and details that establish mood.

During Reading

Prompt for understanding, as appropriate. Possible prompts include the following:

- *What is Danny doing to solve his problem?*
- *How do the illustrations reinforce the mood of the story?*

After Reading

Understand Plot and Mood

Review the concepts of plot and mood. Have students share the elements they included on the reproducible.

Discuss the Text



Determine Cause and Effect Discuss with students how cause-and-effect relationships help make up the events in a story. Point out that one event or action can lead directly to another, or can influence a character’s feelings. Then have students write a paragraph that describes Danny’s feelings and what causes them.

Assessment Checkpoint

- Can the student explain how the illustrations add to the mood of the story?

- Does the student recognize the problem Danny faces and how he tries to solve it?

Day 2

(pp. 26–47)

In This Section Danny’s father tells him the legend of Aionwahta (Hiawatha). Then Danny’s teacher invites his father to tell the legend to the class.

Before Reading

Focus Attention

Have students summarize what they’ve read so far. Then read aloud the title of Chapter 4. Ask students to predict what might happen in this chapter.

Vocabulary

- Explain to students that to *comfort* (p. 27) means “to lessen someone’s grief or sorrow.” Have students think of an occasion when they might comfort someone.

Other Words to Know

- **grief** (p. 29) “sadness caused by trouble or loss”
- **transform** (p. 35) “to change”

During Reading

Prompt for understanding, as appropriate. Here’s one possible prompt:

- *Look in the glossary for that word. How does the definition help you understand the story?*

After Reading

Understand Plot and Mood

Have students identify the steps the main character has taken so far to solve his problem. Then ask students to share the information they added to the reproducible.

Discuss the Text



Determine Cause and Effect Have students review the series of causes and events in the legend about Aionwahta (pp. 26–37). Then have them write a paragraph that identifies these linked events, using signal words and phrases, such as *because*, *since*, and *as a result*.

Assessment Checkpoint

- Does the student use the glossary to help him or her understand the text?

Day 3

(pp. 48–64)

In this Section Danny gets hit with a basketball. Then he finds out his friend Will is in a gang.

Before Reading

Focus Attention

Ask students to retell the events in the story so far, and explain why Danny feels his problem may now be solved. Then have students look at the titles to preview Chapters 5 and 6. Ask them what they think might happen in “The Longest Day.” Encourage students to predict how his classmates might treat Danny after his father’s talk.

Vocabulary

- Say: *The policeman motioned us to cross the street.* Lead students to understand that *motioned* (p. 55) means “moved a part of the body to show what one wants.” Ask students to act out the word and then use the word *motioned* in a sentence that describes what they did.

Other Words to Know

- **casual** (p. 55): “informal; without a purpose”
- **detectors** (p. 52): “devices that identify the presence of something, such as smoke”
- **tardy** (p. 53): “late”

During Reading

Prompt for understanding, as appropriate. Here's one possible prompt:

- *What new problems does Danny face?*

After Reading

Understand Plot and Mood

Have students identify the new problems that Danny faces, and add them to their reproducible. Then have students look at the illustrations on pages 50 and 63. Ask students to discuss the mood that the illustrations help evoke.

Discuss the Text



Determine Cause and Effect Have students trace Danny's feelings in these chapters. Then have them write a paragraph that identifies the cause-and-effect relationships that affect his feelings. Ask them to include how identifying the relationships helps them understand the story.

Assessment Checkpoint

- Can the student identify the additional problems that Danny faces, and how they affect the plot?

Day 4

(pp. 65–79)

In This Section Danny and his mother rush to the hospital to see Mr. Bigtree after his accident at work. Later, Danny makes peace with Tyrone.

Before Reading

Focus Attention

Have students preview the remaining titles and then read to find out whether Danny can resolve his problem. Ask them to add to the reproducible as they read.

Vocabulary

- Say: *I swerved my bike and grazed the fence.* Challenge students to define *grazed* (p. 71), which means “touched lightly in passing.” Ask students what might happen if one car *grazed* another car. (scrape off paint, knock off a side mirror)

Other Words to Know

- **blueprints** (p. 70): “photographs with white print and outlines on a blue background that show building plans”
- **signaled** (p. 71): “made a motion”

During Reading

Prompt for understanding, as appropriate. Here's one possible prompt:

- *What words help describe the mood here?*

After Reading

Understand Plot and Mood

Have students reread page 74, and then discuss what's happening to Danny and his problem. Ask students why Richard Bigtree's advice to his son helps him to solve his problem.

Discuss the Text



Determine Cause and Effect Have students write sticky notes about the most important events in the story. Then have them write a series of cause-and-effect relationships that tie the events together. They should include the initial problem and how it was solved.

Assessment Checkpoint

- Can the student identify words that create mood, and describe the mood that the words create?

Options for Further Instruction

Digging Deeper

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Review with students that *Eagle Song* is realistic fiction. Ask a volunteer to provide a definition of this literary genre. Point out that realistic fiction contains characters and story events that could happen in real life. The plot often concerns a problem that the main character (or characters) has to solve. The turning point in the plot occurs when the character finds a possible solution to the problem.

Have students discuss *Eagle Song* as an example of realistic fiction. Use the following questions as prompts:

- Do you think this story could happen in real life? Why or why not?
- How realistic are Danny, his parents, and the other characters in the book?
- What problem is Danny trying to solve? Is the solution he finds realistic? Explain.



Writing

Write a Letter

Remind students that in *Eagle Song* Danny's father is often away from his family in Brooklyn for weeks at a time, working on construction jobs. Have students write a letter that Danny might have written to his father while he was away, explaining how he feels about school. Have students use the format of a friendly letter, with an informal greeting and closing.

Word Study Mini-lesson

Blended Words

- Explain to students that a blended word is formed when parts of two other words are combined. The meaning of the blended word then combines the meanings of the words that make it up.
- Write the words *motor* and *hotel*. Then erase the *or* in *motor* and the *ho* in *hotel*, and combine the words to create the word *motel*. Ask students to explain the difference between a motel and a hotel. If needed, explain that a motel is a roadside hotel that provides parking near or next to the building. The word *motel* was invented around 1925 when people began to travel by car. Ask students why they think the word *motor* was chosen and blended with *hotel*.
- Point out that, if students know a word is a blended word and they know the two separate words that make it up, they can use the information as a clue to the meaning of the blended word.
- Have students brainstorm other blended words such as *brunch* (*breakfast* and *lunch*) and *guesstimate* (*guess* and *estimate*) and identify the two words that were blended.

ESL/ELL

Support

Students may need additional help with some of the slang and dialect in the book. Introduce and explain to students words and phrases such as *dude* (p. 46), *That was some gusher you had, kiddo* (p. 57), and the greeting *Yo!* (pp. 56 and 77). Invite them to have a conversation using these words and phrases.

Name _____

Date _____

Complete the chart to describe the plot and mood of the story.

Main Character

Setting/Mood

Problem

Solution

Ending

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