

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Maze

by
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Book Information

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Jason, Gwen and Booj are determined to reach Odon, who was once Dinotopia's wisest healer and is Gwen's last hope for finding a cure for her father's illness. But they must make it through Odon's maze and convince the hermit to help them.

Topics: Adventure, Rescue/Save; Mysteries, Misc./Other; Science Fiction, Other Worlds; Series, Dinotopia

Main Characters

Booj a proud and intelligent dinosaur who is prone to causing mischief; he joins Gwen and Jason on their quest

Cayley Gwen's loyal friend, who cares for Gwen's father while Gwen searches for a cure

Dismo the elderly dinosaur befriended by Eric Corey; he unintentionally gives Eric a deadly disease

Dr. Augustus Trapp the doctor who diagnoses Eric Corey

Eric Corey Gwen's self-absorbed father, who comes to terms with his parental mistakes while suffering from a horrible sickness; he is self-employed as a farmer

Gwen Corey a brave young girl who sets out to find a cure for her father's illness

Jason a young boy coming of age by studying in solitude; he agrees to help Gwen find someone who can cure her father's illness

Odon an ancient and knowledgeable dinosaur who lives like a hermit in the center of the Maze because he objects to interaction between humans and dinosaurs

Ulla a Megaraptor who is Dr. Trapp's assistant

Xin the Elder of Booj's village, who asks Booj to leave

Vocabulary

construct to build

geyser a natural spring that periodically erupts, ejecting steam and hot water

millennia thousands of years

mortar and pestle a sturdy stone bowl and a small club-shaped instrument used to grind or mash substances, especially herbs or medications

perplexed confused or unsure

tributary a river or stream that empties into another, often larger, river or lake

Synopsis

In the far off land of Dinotopia, a young girl named Gwen Corey is fraught with the worry that she does not have her father's love. She tries confronting him with this concern, but he gives her a noncommittal response and avoids further discussion.

In another village, a young dinosaur named Booj is being reprimanded for his pranks. Xin, the Elder of the village, tells Booj that he should leave the village so he can explore options in life, seek his destiny, and thereby learn to cooperate with his peers.

The day after the discussion between Gwen and her father, her father comes home from his farm work and yells at Gwen for not having prepared a meal. Gwen is upset by this behavior partly because it is uncharacteristic of him and partly because her friend Cayley is there to witness this rebuke. Since she is not aware her father is suffering the early stages of a horrible disease, Gwen runs off to the forest and falls into a pit.

Jason, the boy who dug the pit, is from distant parts and is living in solitude while he studies scrolls as part of a Trial to learn how to become an adult. Jason discovers Gwen in the pit and, while he is speaking with Gwen and Cayley, they hear Dismo, the dinosaur friend of the Corey family, bellowing for help. They all arrive at Gwen's house to find her father collapsed from an incurable dinosaur virus that is highly contagious and deadly for human

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beings.

When the doctor tells Gwen nothing can be done for her father, Jason departs and returns with a scroll telling the legend of a dinosaur named Odon, who may have the knowledge to heal her father. Odon is rumored to be avoiding humans by living in the Maze, a structure built to protect the dinosaurs from humans before the two species worked out their differences and were able to live in harmony.

After hearing the tale in Jason's scroll, Gwen persuades him to help her seek out the Maze and Odon. Cayley agrees to care for Gwen's father while they are gone. As they are traveling, Booj saves Jason and Gwen from drowning in a river. Booj joins them on their quest and helps them interpret the poem Jason is using to guide them to the Maze.

When they discover the entrance to the Maze using a combination of educated guesses and pure luck, the three still need teamwork to navigate to the center. Jason uses the phases of the moon to decipher the code to a gate, Booj talks Gwen and Jason through a deadly gas leak, and Gwen realizes that the hideous "monster" they are hearing is actually a geyser. Together they conclude that the center of the Maze is probably located near the geyser. They go forward and find Odon at the Maze's core.

While the three adventurers have been seeking Odon, Cayley falls asleep while watching Mr. Corey. In the midst of fever-induced dreams, Mr. Corey ponders the errors he has made with Gwen and determines to mend their relationship. He sets out to find her and, in his delirium, mistakes a young girl washing her clothes at the river as Gwen. He apologizes and wanders off.

Back at the house, Cayley awakens and goes after Mr. Corey with Dismo, the Coreys' elderly partner on their farm. They are terrified when they realize Mr. Corey is near a river: if he comes into contact with it, it is possible he will contaminate the water supply for several towns in Dinotopia. They find him, but Cayley becomes infected while she is struggling to

subdue Mr. Corey.

In the meantime, Gwen and Jason risk their own lives to save Booj when Odon feigns an attack against him. Through this, Gwen and Jason prove to Odon that humans are not threats to dinosaurs. Together Odon and Jason concoct a cure for both Cayley and Mr. Corey.

The story ends with Gwen reconciling with her father, Booj joining the Corey family, and Odon deciding to join Jason in his study of the scrolls.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Why does Gwen's father not want to talk to Gwen when she has questions for him?

Eric Corey wants to be the best possible parent to Gwen to make up for her not having a mother. Unfortunately, Gwen often asks him questions he cannot answer. This makes him feel bad, and he tries to avoid Gwen's questions so he will not disappoint her by not being able to give her all the answers.

Literary Analysis

What techniques does the author use to make this story exciting?

He gives the characters the important task of saving Gwen's father's life. He creates suspense by describing many dangerous and difficult problems for the characters. He also starts new chapters before concluding the action of the previous chapter. By alternating the site of the action in each chapter, the author creates tension or excitement.

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Inferential Comprehension

Booj and Jason are both considered very intelligent. How do each of their attitudes differ about their own knowledge?

Booj wants everyone to believe that his knowledge is beyond questioning and puts on a great show of self-confidence so everyone will accept whatever he says. However, despite his study of the scrolls, Jason is open to the idea that his knowledge may be flawed or incomplete. When Booj is unsure about his interpretation of the poem, he decides to put on a show of confidence to keep his companions from doubting him. However, when Booj claims Jason's assumptions are incorrect, Jason responds by listening to his arguments and showing a willingness to investigate Booj's theory.

Constructing Meaning

How do Jason, Gwen, and Booj persuade Odon that he should come help Gwen's father?

The persuasion is a four-step process. First, Gwen refuses to leave without Odon's help. Next, Jason and Gwen show him that they are willing to sacrifice their own safety to save Booj. Third, Jason shows sympathy and concern for the event that drove Odon into hiding. Finally, Booj and Gwen reiterate that humans and dinosaurs have learned to work together.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting The Maze is probably the setting described in the most detail in this story. Have the students create a model of the Maze from the description given in the book, or encourage them to use their imaginations to create their own maze.

Understanding Literary Features One theme in this story is that people get more done when they work together. Gwen, Jason, and Booj are better able to solve problems when they cooperate with one another. Have the students break into groups of three or four and attempt to solve a word or jigsaw puzzle or create an obstacle course that the other students will have to work together to

travel through, just as Gwen and her friends work together to navigate the Maze.

Describing Actions or Events Jason has been sent by his father to memorize the contents of several scrolls, but he is lured away from his studies by the idea of having an adventure worthy of its own scroll. Have the students make a scroll recording the adventures of Jason and his friends.

Comparing and Contrasting The dinosaurs and the humans have learned to work together because they each have different but equally useful talents. Have the students compare and contrast the different skills of the two species and explain what is important about each skill based on the examples given in this story.