

When I Was Young in the Mountains

By Cynthia Rylant

Standards

- ELA2R4b The student uses a variety of strategies to gain meaning from grade-level text. The student makes predictions from text content.
- ELA2W1 The student demonstrates competency in the writing process. The student writes text of a length appropriate to address a topic and tell the story.
- 3.RL.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- 3.RL.3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text and illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story.
- W.3.10 With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

Materials

- A copy of the book, When I was Young in the Mountains, by Cynthia Rylant
- A jackdaw (explanation provided below in “Before Reading” #1)
- A piece of construction paper for each student

Before Reading

1. A jackdaw is one way to introduce a book to student because it encourages discussion, helps students access prior knowledge, and promotes the use of predicting skills. Place items that are in some way related to the story in a box (such as a shoebox) that you wish to share with the class. Items for this book might include photos of a general store or a johnny-house, a recipe for cornbread, a toy snake, a lump of coal, or a cocoa can. You might also include objects from your past that are important to you (e.g., a piece of cloth from an article of clothing, a book, or a knickknack, etc).
2. Begin by sharing your jackdaw with the class and talking about how the things in it remind you of when you were younger. Ask students if they have special things they have saved from childhood. What do these things make them think of? Why?
3. Show students the cover of When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant, reading aloud the title. Talk a little bit about Rylant, using the information and questions below.

Questions and points for discussion might include:

- How can you tell that Cynthia Rylant, the author loves animals?
- What do we mean by the term "Appalachia"? (Be prepared to show students the area of West Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland where the Appalachian Mountains are on the map.)
- Most of Cynthia Rylant's story are set in the “Appalachia”. Why do you think this is so?
- Many of Cynthia Rylant's books have won awards. What do you think are characteristics of an award-winning book? (Be prepared to list students' suggestions on the board and include descriptive sentences, interesting vocabulary, and colorful illustrations)

During Reading

Read the book aloud, pausing to ask questions and discuss the book. Below are some suggested questions that you might want to stop and ask in the appropriate places in the story:

- Why would Grandfather be covered with black dust?
- Why do you suppose the Crawfords smelled of sweet milk?
- Who can act out shivering and giggling for us?
- What do you think you will remember most about meals with you family now when you are older?
- Do you have older members of your extended family that live with you?
- In the story, the snake was scary to the girl. What are some things that scare you?

After Reading

Ask for volunteers to share an interesting experience from when they were younger. Write their responses on the board, chart paper or Smartboard. Questions that might promote student participation include:

- What is the earliest experience you remember from your childhood?
- Did you ever visit someone in a different town?
- What is the happiest memory you have from your younger years?

Writing Activity

Create a Flip Book

Directions:

1. Fold a sheet of construction paper down the middle vertically.
2. Turn the paper horizontally and cut the top piece in to three sections.
3. On the top three panels, have the children draw three pictures in sequence from the story.
4. Then, have them write about each picture on the bottom part of the construction paper.
5. Finally, they flip panels open one at a time to read the story to a friend or present to the class.

TRC Question Stems

The following questions have been written with the mClass TRC question stems in mind. Use these questions to **MODEL** (I do! We do! You do!) how students should answer them both orally and in written form. Students should be given opportunities for independent practice with brainstorming and formulating written responses with evidence from the text.

Use details from the story to describe what event took place on Sunday mornings in the schoolhouse. (levels I-K)

- On Sundays, everyone from town went to church in the schoolhouse. They walked across the cow pastures to the dark swimming hole for baptisms. Cousin Peter was laid back into the pond water. His white shirt stuck to him and the grandmother cried.

Is “When I was Young in the Mountains” a good title for this story? Use details from the story to explain your answer. (levels I-K)

- The title, “When I was Young in the Mountains” is a good title for this story. This book describes events that take place during the days and nights of living in the mountains. Events that students may mention could include: when grandpa comes home in the evening from work; granddaughter meeting grandpa on the front porch and him always kissing her on the forehead; Grandmother cooking homemade meals nightly; the children enjoying walks through the woods; and the children pumping water from the old well into round tin tubs for their nightly bath.

Describe how Mr. and Ms. Crawford were alike? (levels L-M)

- Both Mr. and Ms. Crawford worked at the store that the children visited. Mr. and Ms. Crawford looked alike and always smelled of sweet mint.