



The Cats in Krasinski Square

By Karen Hesse Illustrated by Wendy Watson

Grade/Class/Subject: 3-5 Language Arts
3-5 Social Studies

Content Standards: LA.E.1.2: The student understands the common features of a variety of literary forms.
SS.A.3.2: The student understands Western and Eastern civilizations since the Renaissance.

Content Objectives: Meets FL STATUTE 1003.42 – *The Holocaust*

The student will understand the development of plot and how conflicts are resolved in a story.

The student will understand the types of laws and government systems that have developed since the Renaissance, (e.g., the rise of totalitarian government and dictatorships).

Language Objective: Students will recognize how the events in the story lead to the resolution of the conflict.

Students will put into context, the events of the story as they relate to the time period during which they occurred.

Grouping Configuration: Whole class, groups of 2-4

Story Synopsis: This graphic novel is based upon a true story that took place in Poland during the time of the Warsaw Ghetto and World War II. A plan was devised to trick the Gestapo, so that food could be smuggled into the Ghetto. The many cats roaming through Krasinski Square would be used as a part of the ploy. It's a plan that cannot fail.

Key Vocabulary: rubble, furling, Ghetto, Jewish armband, Polish look, Polish walk, Polish words, satchels, goats, smuggle, snarling, chaos, frenzied, vanishes.

Supplementary Materials: Sentence Strips with a sentence written for each vocabulary word. Cut each strip into pieces, with a word on each piece. (Card Sort)
Activity Sheet to be completed in groups after the story is read.

Lesson Sequence

Introduction: Building Background

Pre-Reading Strategy: Prediction

1. While holding up the book for the class to see, ask students to predict what the book might be about based on the title and the illustration on the front cover. After a couple of minutes of discussion, explain that the story is based on a true story. Talk a bit about fact and fiction. Describe the setting of the story; Poland, the city of Warsaw, the Warsaw Ghetto, World War II, and the Holocaust (a brief history is shared on the inside back cover). At this time a discussion of acceptance, tolerance and the human spirit would be appropriate. This is the story of a young girl, her older sister Mira, Mira's friend Michal, other friends and of course the cats. This story relates how these young people devised a plan to help feed those behind the walls of the Warsaw Ghetto, while risking their own lives. It is the cats from Krasinski Square that turn out to be true heroes.

Vocabulary:

1. Introduce each vocabulary word/term. Have students share what they think the word/term means once they are shown a sentence strip with the word/term highlighted. Reinforce the idea of using context clues to find meaning to a word/term.
2. Have students complete a Card Sort by putting together a sentence that has been cut up, each sentence containing one of the vocabulary words.

Modeling/Guided Instruction:

1. Discuss the meaning of the words, "courage" and "hero". Share a personal experience that describes a time in your life when you or someone you knew showed courage. Relate an experience about who is a hero to you.
2. Ask students to share a story or experience they might have had with a hero or courage.
3. Discuss the terms: problem, conflict, and resolution. Ask students how they think this might be related to the story.
4. Introduce a story/event time line to the students. Tell them that as they read/listen to the story, they should be thinking about how the events in the story led up to resolving the conflict.

Group work:

1. Place students into groups of 4 to complete this activity
2. Each group will be given a copy of the attached Activity Sheet.
3. As a group they have to complete the Activity Sheet. They have to agree on the answers and one person has to be chosen by their group mates to present the information.

Review/Assessment:

1. After each group reports to the class, this is the teacher's opportunity to clarify any ideas that are not clear. It is good practice to ask other students to respond to any clarifying questions the teacher might have.
2. Assessment is the completion of this activity successfully for all students.

The Cats in Krasinski Square

By
Karen Hesse

Match the words in the first column with the correct information in the second column.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. The narrator | A. The center of Warsaw, Poland, where people gathered and children played |
| 2. Mira | B. A way to get food into the Warsaw Ghetto where people were starving |
| 3. Krasinski Square | C. The narrator's older sister |
| 4. Warsaw Ghetto | D. Used to help outsmart the German soldiers, and their Hungry dogs, which thought the baskets and bags were filled with food. |
| 5. Smuggling food | E. The young Jewish girl who tells the story of The Cats in Krasinski Square |
| 6. The cats | F. A place where Jewish men, women and children were forced to live. It was terribly crowded, dirty and people were barely given any food. |

Answer the following questions with your group members.

- 1. What was the major problem facing the narrator, her sister and others, including the people forced to be in the Warsaw Ghetto?**
- 2. How did this group of young people try to solve the problem?**
- 3. Would you say that courage was displayed? Explain your answer.**
- 4. Very often when we see courage and bravery, there are heroes. Who are the heroes in this story, and why?**