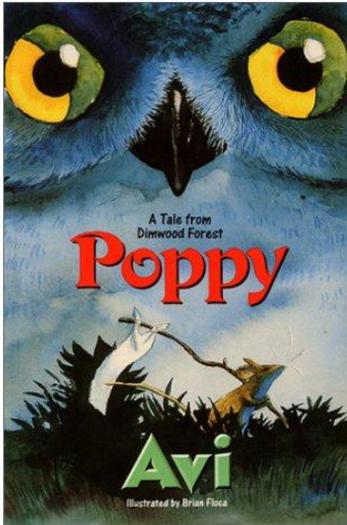


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Education 205 Children's Literature

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Response-Centered Scaffolded Reading Experience

Poppy by Avi

Bibliographic Information:

Avi. (1995). *Poppy*. Illus. by Brian Floca. New York, NY: Orchard Books., 147 pages.

Readability Level: 4.5

Genre: Fantasy

Summary:

Poppy is a captivating animal fantasy about a field mouse named Poppy and how she must overcome the barriers of fear, shame, and loneliness to uncover truths, stand up for what is right, and save her whole family from starvation. Many animals live in Dimwood Forest and the surrounding country, including Poppy and her huge family. For the mice, life is good as long as they listen to Mr. Ocax, the great horned owl of Dimwood region, and obey all his rules. The mice must ask Mr. Ocax's permission to go almost anywhere; in return, Mr. Ocax says that he

will protect the mice from dreaded porcupines which roam the forest seeking to devour mice. However, when Poppy's boyfriend Ragweed gets eaten by Mr. Ocax and Poppy only nearly escapes, she begins to question his protection and the way the mice must live in constant fear and captivity. When Poppy's family gets too big and they must move to a new place or else starve, Mr. Ocax denies their permission to move and Poppy sets out on a mission to prove that Mr. Ocax is not on their side. On her journey, she meets and befriends Erethizon Dorastum, a porcupine, and realizes that Mr Ocax lied to all the mice and that he, not porcupines, eat the mice. As small as she is, Poppy faces her biggest fears as she travels to the land and eventually defeats Mr. Ocax battle. She uncovers the truth of Dimwood Forest and the new land, defeats the enemy, and saves her family from starvation and a life of captivity; even when her family did not believe or support her, Poppy did the right thing.

Themes:

Courage: Poppy constantly comes face to face with great fears and situations that require courage.

- Poppy has the courage to follow Ragweed Glitter Creek without asking Mr. Ocax's permission
- Poppy has the courage to face Mr. Ocax with her father, even after he ate Ragweed and almost ate her during their last encounter
- Poppy has the courage to go before her Father and request permission for her mission
- Poppy has the courage to overcome the disgrace she feels from her family and go on a journey to save them
- Poppy has courage to travel alone through Dimwood forest
- Poppy has the courage to befriend a porcupine
- Poppy courageously defeats Mr. Ocax in the final battle

Friendship vs. Judgment

There is a theme of befriending outcasts or those who are mis-judged. Poppy is courted first by Ragweed, disapproved by her father and a misfit in the community, but Ragweed is the one who first sees through Mr. Ocax's lies. Then, later, Poppy comes face to face with the most dreaded porcupine but realizes that Ereth was also misjudged and becomes his friend. This story emphasizes the need to give everyone a chance and to get to know others before judging.

Standing up for what is Right

Sometimes, we must question the way things are or what we have been told. In this story, Poppy follows Ragweed's example when she begins to question what she has been told about Mr. Ocax and porcupines, and the very nature of life as a mouse in The Dimwood Region. When she makes discoveries about the truth, she has to stand up for what is right even if it means going against her father, her family, and encountering many dangers.

Addressing Vocabulary:

Word Wall:

There will be a poster called “Poppy World Wall.” There will be 2 baskets and a dictionary under the word wall. On the word wall will be a list of many interesting or new words from the book. In their free time, students can choose one of these words, find the definition, and use the word properly in a written sentence. Then the sentence will be stapled under the word on the word wall. It can be a challenge to complete all the words on the word wall! In this way, students are taking ownership of their own learning, and the dictionary becomes a great source and not a boring tool. They can also use the internet as a source to look up words.

Goals and Objectives:

Literary Goals:

- 1) Students will identify major themes and messages from various sources of literature and connect them to each other and to real life
- 2) Students will deeply explore characters in “Poppy” and how their traits, motivations, and feelings impact the story; students will express in writing and discussion how these can be relevant to students’ own traits, motivations, and feelings.
- 3) Students will form opinions and conclusions about themes, characters, and elements of the story and express these in writing.
- 4) Students will improve their read-aloud ability including fluency, voice, and expression through various reading activities.
- 5) Students will take part in multiple discussions including one-on-one, group, and class discussions, displaying appropriate behavior and input about relevant issues within the text.
- 6) Students will form ideas and opinions about issues from the story and express them in writing, verbally, and actively in ways that transcends the story and demonstrates an understanding that connects to real life.
- 7) Students will understand the themes of courage, standing up for the truth, friendship, and judging.

Christian Goals:

- 1) Students will connect the theme of courage with a biblical perspective through exploring Old and New Testament examples of courage. They will recognize the relevance of biblical courage in their own lives
- 2) Students will demonstrate that they understand the connection between action and truth and how God calls us to act and speak against injustice in our world. Students will participate in individual and group projects that involve action to stand up for truth and justice.
- 3) Students will relate themes of relationship to God’s call to unity among believers; they will actively demonstrate the importance of using our differences and uniqueness to work together for His kingdom.

Standards: Iowa Core Curriculum Standards

Reading

1. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explore the details in the text.
2. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
3. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language
4. Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza
5. Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

Reading: Foundational Skills:

3. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension
 - a. read on-level text with purpose and understanding
 - b. read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
 - c. use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Speaking and Listening

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 - b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussion (e.g. gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion.
 - c. ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
 - d. explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
2. Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text and read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and detail

Pre-Reading Activities:

- 1) Divide the class into thirds: one third for owls, one for mice, and one for porcupines. In their groups, students will brainstorm what they know about their assigned animal. Then the class will gather together and make a class list of everything they know. The master lists will be written on posters that are shaped as the animal and are life-size (except the mouse poster will be beside a cut-out mouse shape). This will give the students a visual image of how small a mouse is compared to an owl compared to a porcupine. As a pre-writing assignment, students will write the first chapter of a book that includes all three

animal species. This will give the students some pre-knowledge of the animals and make the students excited about what Avi does with the characters in the book.

- 2) The teacher will purchase a mouse from a pet store a few days before the class starts the book, Poppy. The students will have a chance to observe a real mouse for a day and write their observations in a Poppy notebook. How does the mouse move? How does it sleep? Is it good at hiding? What does the mouse eat? The character of Poppy will be much more meaningful after observing a real mouse. (as an alternative to the first writing activity, students could write a story beginning about the classroom mouse and imagine what her story would be if she escaped from her cage and had to find her way outside to freedom. What challenges and fears would the classroom mouse face?)
- 3) Also while introducing the story, have a “mouse story time,” where students just share stories of their own mice experiences. Have they ever been surprised by a mouse? Afraid of a mouse? Worried that a mouse is in the house? Once the children share their own personal experiences, the class is ready to delve into Poppy, the story of a mouse who has fears and worries all of her own.

During Reading Activities:

1 – Mr. Ocax

2 – Poppy Remembers

3 – Poppy Alone

4 – Emergency Meeting

Chapters 1 – 4 will be read aloud to engage the students. In chapter 4, when we are introduced to Poppy’s family, this is especially important so the teacher can establish voices for the characters and give them depth through expressive reading.

5 – Leaving Gray House

Chapter 5 will be read individually at home because the section when Poppy leaves Gray house with her father to meet Mr. Ocax is a very exciting part that the students will want to engage in on their own. Before moving on to chapter 6, students will be paired with a partner to discuss what happened in Chapter 5 and how they think Poppy might be feeling as she and her father are almost ready to stand before Mr. Ocax!

6 – Standing before Mr. Ocax

7 – Home again

Chapter 6 & 7 will be read aloud again because meeting Mr. Ocax is a significant character chapter; the teacher can establish a voice for this powerful owl that will bring characterization to the rest of the story.

8 – Poppy and Papa

9 – On her way

Chapter 8 & 9 will be read in groups of four. The students have a good sense by now of the characters and this intense conversation between Poppy and Papa will be good for the students to work through together. They may have differing perspectives on this challenging part of the story. Chapter 9 is also a good chapter for group reading because Poppy begins her journey – the students should benefit from the smaller groups as it might be easier to feel like they are along for the ride with four students than it would be with twenty.

10 – Dimwood Forest

11 – Erethizon Dorsatum

12 – What Poppy Learns

13 – Early Morning

Chapter 10 – 13 will be teacher read aloud. Erethizon Dorastum, the porcupine, is perhaps the most fun and entertaining character and enjoying him with a well rehearsed voice is important. Also, the porcupine is funny and the whole class can laugh and enjoy this comic relief together. These chapters are filled with intense adventure and quirky humor that will bring the class together in a read aloud. Also, Erethizon can be a little on the edge sometimes so having a teacher read these sections can be helpful and will be most comfortable for the students.

14 – On the Way to the New House

15 – Alone again

Chapter 14&15 will be read in partner reading. Now that the students know Ereth, they will enjoy having the chance to speak his parts as well as Poppy's.

16 – The truth at Last

This is an important part of the story when Poppy discovers the truth about the fake owl that is scaring Mr. Ocax; now she has power over him. The students will read this section on their own and then gather as a class to discuss the truth that she found out. In this way, students will be challenged in their individual reading but will not miss the important elements of the story because of the post sharing / discussion

17 – A Surprising Conversation

18 – The Battle

19 – The Return

20 – A New Beginning

Chapters 17 – 20 will be read as teacher read aloud for several reasons. First, the conversation and the battle are very climactic and full of action and adventure and this suspense and emotion is excitedly experienced as a class read with fluency and voice. Also, some students who struggle with reading cannot take in the story as well if they have to read. I want the end of the

book to be really impactful in story and theme, not in teaching more fluent reading. Therefore, all the students will be more likely to have a positive, enjoyable, and exciting experience with the end of the book and that will be the feeling they are left with in regards to the whole book.

Post Reading Activities:

1) Poppy's Diary

Poppy is a mouse but she has fears, worries, and emotions much like a human character. Poppy is an easy character to relate to. Even though the children may never have to battle an owl with a porcupine quill, they can relate to the emotions and internal struggles Poppy faces in this book. Throughout the book, children will write Diary entries from the perspective of Poppy. They will focus on what Poppy might be feeling at certain parts of the book and show how she changes and develops. This will help students think beyond plot and action and will cause them to relate to the story on a deeper, more emotional level.

- a) **Journal Entry 1:** After chapter 4. By this point, Poppy has lost her fiancé, been almost eaten by Mr. Ocax, found out her family is in danger of starving if they don't move to a new home, and told by her father that she must be the one to accompany him to ask Mr. Ocax's permission to move. Poppy is feeling sadness, confusion, fear. She feels misunderstood and singled out from her family and is about to embark on a very scary trip to visit Mr. Ocax. Students can focus on any of these aspects in their journal entry.
- b) **Journal Entry 2:** After chapter 8: By now, Poppy has been blamed for Mr. Ocax's denial to move. She has met with her Father and has made the final decision to go to the new house all on her own. Students will write a journal entry highlighting the emotions Poppy is feeling at this point in the story.
- c) **Journal Entry 3:** After chapter 16. Poppy has learned many things in the last 8 chapters. She has met Ereth and realized Mr Ocax, not porcupines, is the enemy. She has learned that the new house is a perfect place for her family and that the Owl guarding it is actually a fake. How might Poppy be feeling with all this new information? What new fears and uncertainties does she now face?
- d) **Journal Entry 4:** After Chapter 20. Poppy has grown up a lot in this story. The children can focus on any aspect of what Poppy has discovered and how she might be feeling at the end of the story. What might her reflections be?

2) Friendship and Working together

After the chapters focused on Ereth and Poppy's relationship, read the book *The Lion and the Mouse* and discuss as a class how we can benefit from each other by looking past judgments and differences. What would the world be like if we were all the same? Why do you think God made us all different? It's easy to judge people but have you ever gotten to know someone and realized that they were really special and a friend even though they are different from you? For one day, the class will be split. Half the students will be porcupines and half will be mice. They cannot sit together at lunch, in story time they will be divided by a strip of tape in the story corner, the desks will be divided, etc. At the end of the day, we will talk about how the classroom changed when we were divided by a label.

3) **Parallels with Esther:**

There are many bible characters that parallel with Poppy. During the weeks of reading Poppy, the class will also read the story of Esther from a children's bible. Most likely, students will make connections themselves throughout the reading of both stories. Once the stories are both finished, students will break into groups and brainstorm on a chart ways that Poppy and Esther are similar: How they were both courageous, how they both risked their lives, how they both had to leave their families, how they had to stand up for the right thing, how they had to speak for the truth, how they saved their families from death. Then the class will reconvene and talk about the similarities. As a class, the teacher will also address the issue of their differences. Although the stories are very similar, what makes them different? What role does God play in the story of Esther? Would the students rather have "Poppy courage" or "Esther courage?"

4) **Moving beyond the story into action:**

This story is about animals in a forest, but in a way is about a society and injustice in that society. After reading the story, completing the during reading activities, writing, discussing, and role playing, students have been challenged in their thinking about courage, truth, doing what's right, friendship, fear, and also injustice. These are issues that relate to the lives of children all over the world. The class will enter into a month of fighting injustice and standing up for those who need a voice. They will do this in a variety of ways.

- a. **Snack-packs:** there are children in the community who aren't getting enough food, just like Poppy's family in the story. Children will volunteer in groups and put snack-packs together at certain lunch hours. The class will also discuss how we can be an active voice for children who do not have enough to eat.
- b. **Raise awareness of Oppression and Child sponsor project:** there are many organizations that are helping children who have suffered injustice. One of these organizations is Compassion. They organize sponsorship to help impoverished students receive the food, school, and medicine that they need. The class will study a country that is oppressed where children do not have the rights that children should have. The class will organize a soup supper fundraiser where they will present songs, posters, and information to the community and be a voice for fellow children just like Poppy in the story. They will raise money to sponsor a child in that country. (As the teacher, I will supplement the money raised to sponsor the child for the whole year). For the rest of the year, the students will write letters and draw pictures to send to the sponsored child.

5) **Symbol, Art, Courage**

As an art project, students will make an earring like Ragweed's in *Poppy*. They will hang this symbol from their backpacks to remind them to be courageous in courage month. The class will discuss how they can be courageous even within the school by standing up for what is right, giving people a chance instead of judging, and speaking up when it's easier to be silent.

Additional Resources:

1) Videos

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_AEmxaboH5s&feature=fvwrel

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUkjOgefwmk&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2KCYsmWFP8&NR=1>

These You-tube videos can be used with discernment to address the social injustice issue of child labor in India and China. They deal with difficult issues but perhaps students can and should know about children just like themselves being oppressed in the world.

2) Books

A) *The Lion and the Mouse:*

Pinkney, J. (2010). *The lion and the mouse*. Boston, NY: Little, Brown and Company. 31 pages.

Readability Level: not found

Connections: This book can be used to supplement the theme of unusual friendship and of working together in spite of differences.

B) *Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman*

Krull, K. (1996). *Wilma unlimited: how Wilma Rudolph became the world's fastest woman*. Illus. by David Diaz. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company. 36 pages.

Readability: 5.1

Connections: This is a story about how Wilma Unlimited had to rise about the elements and have courage to overcome her fears and barriers to reach her goals. This can be used to supplement the courage theme.

C) *Zero*

Otoshi, K. (2010). *Zero*. San Rafael, Ca: KO Kids Books. 40 pages.

Readability: 2

Connections: This book would make a great connection into a math unit. The characters are all digits and zero doesn't fit in. This book could fit with the theme of how every different individual needs to be valued for their uniqueness in a society. Everyone digit is important and valued in this book, just like every character in Dimwood Forest has their place and value.

D) *Real Kids, Real Stories, Real Change: Courageous Actions around the World*

Sundem, G. (2010). *Real kids, real stories, real change: courageous actions around the world*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Company. 165 pages.

Readability: 4

Connections: This book could be used as a challenge activity. In students free time they can choose to read about these courageous children around the world and write a summary of their story for a courage bulletin board.

E) *The Bible Story*

Turner, P. (1989). *The bible story*. Illus by Brian Wldsmith. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 135 pages.

Readability Level: not found

Connections: This can be included in the challenge activity. Students can also do write up summaries, journal entries, or pictures about courageous bible characters for the Courage bulletin board.

F) *Tomie de Paola's Book of Bible Stories*

de Paola, T. (1988). *Tomie de Paola's book of bible stories*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Readability Level: 3

Connections: Use as an alternative source for the courage bulletin board activity.

3) Poetry

Heroes and She-Roes: Poems of Amazing and Everyday Heroes

Patrick Lewis, J. (2005). *Heroes and she-roes: poems of amazing and everyday heroes*. Illus. by Jim Cooke. New York, NY: Penguin Young Readers Group.

Readability Level: 6.4

Connections: During the unit on Poppy and Courage in Literature, the class could read a courage poem every day from this book on courageous everyday people.