

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

Quake!

by

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Book Information

Joe Cottonwood, Quake!
Quiz Number: 14878
Scholastic, Inc, 1995
ISBN 0-590-22233-3; LCCN
143 Pages
Book Level: 4.0
Interest Level: MG

Franny's day will turn out to be even more upsetting than she expected because the earth beneath her doesn't plan to stay still.

Topics: Adventure, Survival; Disasters, Earthquakes; Historical Fiction, Historical Fiction (All); READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 6-8; READNOW - Perma-Bound, Perma-Bound - Read Now Grades 4-6; READNOW - Perma-Bound, Perma-Bound - Read Now Grades 6-8; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - Grades 6-8 (Theme: Surviving)

Main Characters

Eric a boy Franny likes who lives near her and who helps locate Lara, her dog
Franny a fourteen-year-old girl who performs heroic deeds after an earthquake
Franny's father a man who is determined to keep his demolished home
Franny's mother a woman who prides herself on being a good judge of character
Gwen a nurse who helps the children take Mr. Vanda to safety
Jennie Franny's former best friend who has changed noticeably when the two girls reunite
Jerri Jennie's mother
Jorge and Margarita a young teenaged couple from El Salvador who are taken in by Franny's family
Mr. Perkins Franny's teacher who asks her to help at the school after the quake
Mr. Vanda the neighbor whose house slides down the hill and who is rescued by the three children

Mrs. LaFeau Sidney's teacher who comforts him at the school

Sidney Franny's little brother who is changed from an obnoxious kid to a very scared "clinging vine" after the trauma of an earthquake

Vocabulary

adrenaline a chemical in the body that speeds up the heartbeat, thereby increasing bodily energy
constitution physical makeup
fissure crack
genetic mutation a change in heredity that produces young that are unlike their parents
hypocenter the area where an earthquake is initiated
precocious exceptionally early in development
triage assigning priorities according to medical urgency

Synopsis

Quake! relates the sometimes harrowing and sometimes funny journey of three young children to safety after the 1989 California earthquake. Although the characters are fictitious, the author has drawn on his own life experience with the 1989 quake to tell a very believable story.

Franny, the young heroine, unassumingly and with great risk to herself, goes through her quake-devastated neighborhood turning off propane tank valves to prevent explosions and fires.

Her former best friend, Jennie, is visiting, and helps Franny give assistance to the injured victims they encounter. Jennie has changed since moving away, but through the course of the story, she shows signs of the girl Franny once knew and loved.

Franny's little brother, Sidney, who is an insulting and obnoxious second grade boy, becomes traumatized by the quake and stays as close to Franny, and then his teacher, as humanly possible.

The children eventually reach help at their school and are reunited with their parents. They return to

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their damaged home and must deal with putting their lives back together. While doing this, they welcome a young El Salvadoran couple into their "home," and from them they discover things for which they can be thankful.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

How did the things Sidney said to Franny and Jennie tell the reader about the kind of person he was? Give examples.

His disgusting song, sung to "Joy to the World," shows he probably repeats things without knowing what they mean. He seems to be insensitive to violence and frequently talks in those terms. He also mimics his sister just to annoy her.

Literary Analysis

How are Franny, Jennie, and Sidney each changed by the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989?

Sidney becomes closer to his sister, to whom he looks for security and reassurance. He stops insulting her and her friend. Franny becomes more self-confident after daring to save houses from possible fires caused by propane tanks. She sees her little brother in a kinder light as he relies on her. Jennie seems to find a new direction in her life and allows herself to behave toward her former best friend as she once did.

Inferential Comprehension

Should people be allowed to build their houses in areas where natural disasters often occur? Give reasons for your answer.

As usual, there are two sides to this issue. People should be allowed to choose their residences. However, if disasters occur and the taxpayers have to help pay for the cost of clean-up and rebuilding, then some policy needs to govern when and how often aid should be given.

Constructing Meaning

Which of the three main characters reacted to the earthquake most like the way you would have? Tell why.

Sidney reacted by behaving differently toward Franny. He began as an insulting, pesty little brother and became scared and dependent. Franny reacted very responsibly and learned some important lessons about life. Jennie put her first aid skills to work to help some of the quake victims.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors The geologist in this story refers to the Loma Prieta earthquake as a 6.9 on the Richter scale. Have your students research the Richter scale. Who was Richter? How does the scale work? Have them compile their research into a booklet on earthquakes.

Extending Meaning Being prepared might also include having a plan of action in place for when a disaster might occur. Have your students work with their families to devise a plan of action. Ask them to practice their plan as a family and keep track of these practice times in a log. Have them comment on how their family does each time.

Recognizing Cause and Effect Natural disasters highlight the need for citizens to be prepared. Having basic first aid skills is certainly a good idea. Invite a first aid expert into your classroom to teach your students some basic first aid techniques. These skills are useful in everyday life as well.

Describing Actions or Events In this story, Franny's dog, Lara, helps the three children to escape possible injury by bolting from the house just before the quake hits. Have children read about how animals seem to be able to sense when disasters are imminent. (For example, rats were able to sense when mine cave-ins were about to happen, and their frantic rush to leave a mine tunnel alerted the miners, who were often able to escape also. Miners liked having the rats

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around for this reason.)