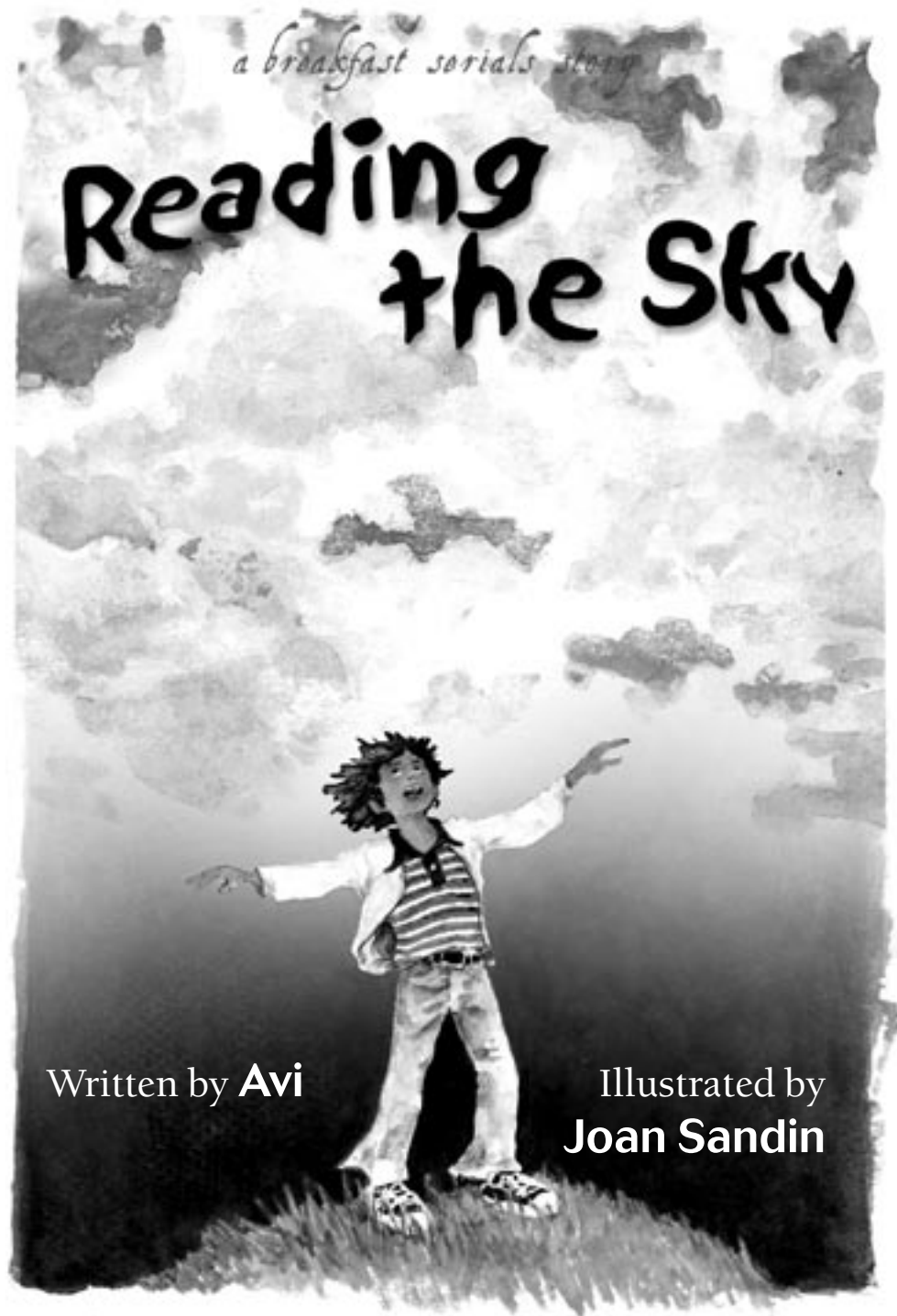


TEACHER'S GUIDE



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D I S T R I B U T E D B Y :

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
ABOUT DYSLEXIA	4
LESSON PLANS	5
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES	18
PUZZLES	21
ANSWERS TO CHAPTER QUESTIONS	23

Introduction

The *Reading the Sky* Teacher's Guide gives students an opportunity to interact with literature, art, and the newspaper through this story by Avi. The illustrations are by Joan Sandin.

Reading the Sky is a story about a 12-year-old boy with a serious reading disability. Jamie Peters escapes from his problem by watching cloud formations and making up stories about them. The characters in his imaginative stories range from King Arthur and his knights to aliens from other planets. Jamie has many opportunities to “read the sky” as he spends part of his vacation at his grandparents’ home in a rural area. However, Jamie’s fascination with the sky places him in conflict with Ed Goddard, a daring thief who steals money on an airplane and parachutes to the ground for his escape.

This Teacher’s Guide includes the following components:

About Dyslexia

This section discusses issues related to serious reading problems.

Lesson Plans

The lesson plans for each chapter are divided into these parts:

- *Vocabulary* identifies important vocabulary words in the chapter. These are words that are defined directly or by example in the story.
- *Let’s Discuss* questions provide an opportunity to discuss the story with students. Most of the questions require students to obtain meaning across text and to think critically.
- *Newspaper Activities* offer real-world connections that relate to the topics and content of each chapter.

Additional Activities

These activities help students explore topics and literary elements in the story.

Puzzles

A crossword puzzle and a word search based on the vocabulary are provided.

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About Dyslexia

“Dyslexia” is an educational term that is defined in a multitude of ways by a variety of educational professionals. Some reading professionals accept a very narrow definition, saying that dyslexia may affect up to 4% of the general population. Other educators use the term to encompass a wide range of reading disabilities, saying that 20% of the population is dyslexic. At one time, dyslexia referred to the loss of the ability to read due to damage to the central nervous system, however, today many reading professionals believe there is a congenital or hereditary aspect to the condition.

The Literacy Dictionary defines dyslexia as:

A developmental reading disability, presumably congenital and perhaps hereditary, that may vary in degree from mild to severe. *Note:* Dyslexia, originally called *word blindness*, occurs in persons who have adequate vision, hearing, intelligence, and general language functioning . . .

[Source: Harris, T. & Hodges, R. (Eds.). (1995). *The Literacy Dictionary*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.]

Reading professionals also use other terms to identify reading problems: “reading difficulties,” “reading disabilities” and “learning disabilities.” Many students have difficulty with phonics or comprehension, but they don’t exhibit the same behaviors reading professionals observe in students with dyslexia. Some of these behaviors include:

- Confusion with letters that look similar – *b, d, p, q* – beyond normal developmental stages
- Reversals of words – *was-saw, now-won* – beyond normal developmental stages
- Confusion of small words, such as *of, for, from*.

A condition frequently confused with dyslexia is “Irlen Syndrome.” Irlen Syndrome is a visual perceptual dysfunction. It is not a problem with vision. Individuals with Irlen Syndrome experience reading problems because their brains process full light differently. White light on a page of print causes the Irlen individual to see the type on the page as washed out or blurry. Sometimes the letters of the words appear to run up and down like seesaws on the page. In some cases, the individual sees “rivers” of white space running down the page through the print. Irlen Syndrome sufferers can read more easily when they place colored overlays over the print on a page. Some Irlen individuals wear dark glasses when they read. The change in color of the white space on a page makes the letters stop dancing around for the reader.

Jamie, the main character in *Reading the Sky*, appears to be a true dyslexic. In spite of good intelligence and imagination, he has had difficulty learning letters. He has been taught to focus on one letter at a time and to draw letters in the air as strategies to identify letters, but he still has difficulty reading.

Because the causes of reading problems vary greatly, most reading professionals support using multiple strategies to teach reading. Some students learn well by learning the names and sounds of letters and blending them together. Other students do well when they begin by learning whole words and then analyzing the letter-sound relationships. Reading instruction should involve activities that require the student to look at the word, listen to its sound, and write the word. Because students learn in different ways, teachers provide a range of reading experiences in their classrooms.

Jamie in the Clouds

Let's Discuss

1. Why do you think people like to imagine that clouds look like people and things?
2. Why would someone say that looking at the clouds is better than reading a book?
3. What does the expression "boulder garden" tell you about the land where Jamie's grandparents live?
4. What do you think Jamie's grandmother means when she says that only Jamie can know what he saw in the clouds?
5. What does Jamie's story about King Arthur tell you about Jamie?
6. Why do you think Jamie hates to talk about his dyslexia?
7. How does Jamie react when he has to read the note to his grandmother?
8. What is it like for Jamie to try to read?
9. Why do you think Jamie's grandmother says that watching the sky is Jamie's way of reading?
10. Make a prediction: What do you think Ed Goddard is planning?



NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY

Make a collage of newspaper words and photos of items Jamie could use on a summer vacation in the country.

Vocabulary

billowing, adj

large and fluffy, as if filled with air

dyslexia, n

a serious reading disability

sarcastic, adj

sharp and critical

A Daring Heist Is Planned

Let's Discuss

1. Why do you think Ed Goddard is watching the plane so carefully?
2. How do you know that Keystone is a small airline?
3. Why is the heavy green truck guarded so carefully?
4. How is the payroll bag handled on the plane?
5. How does Goddard plan to escape after he steals the money?
6. Why does Goddard study maps of Pennsylvania and New York?
7. Why does Goddard make fake reservations on the plane?
8. What do Jamie's stories about Pegasus and Apollo tell you about him?
9. What have other students done to Jamie in the past?
10. Make a prediction: What will Jamie do when he gets to the Luries' house?

**NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY**

Look at the weather map in your newspaper. Draw a line from your state or city to the Pennsylvania-New York border. Make a list of the states or cities you would pass over if you flew along that line.

Vocabulary**crest, n***the top of a hill***heist, n***slang word for a theft***suspiciously, adv***in an untrusting manner*

Let's Discuss

1. Why do you think the Luries raise dairy cows instead of food crops?
2. Why isn't Jamie interested in seeing Gillian?
3. Why do you think Jamie feels uncomfortable about Gillian and Todd?
4. What do you think "keep the faith" means?
5. How do you think Todd really feels about Jamie?
6. How do you think Gillian really feels about Jamie?
7. What do "President Nixon" and "Vietnam" refer to?
8. How does Goddard test himself to see how well he knows his map?
9. What are Goddard's last-minute plans before he leaves for the airport?
10. Make a prediction: What will happen when Goddard tries to steal the money on the airplane?

**NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY**

Look in the classified section of the newspaper to find a used car that is at least 10 years old. Then find an automotive item in the regular ads that you could add to your car. Explain how your addition would improve the car.

Vocabulary**pasture, n***a plot of land where animals graze***superintendent, n***a person in charge of an apartment building***wrench, n***a tool used to turn a nut or bolt*

Let's Discuss

1. Why do you think Gillian is curious about Jamie's cloud watching?
2. What does Gillian do to try to stay hidden from Jamie?
3. What happens to catch Jamie's attention?
4. Why do you think Gillian says that Jamie is stuck up?
5. Why do you think Gillian plans to return to watch Jamie the next day?
6. Why do you think Goddard wears a business suit on the airplane? Why could it be a bad idea?
7. Why do you think the airline people are not suspicious about so many "no shows" for the flight?
8. How is Goddard's plan going?
9. How much time does Goddard have to steal the money and escape?
10. Make a prediction: Will Goddard be successful?

**NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY**

Find an ad for an airline special in the travel section of your newspaper. Select a place you would like to visit. Write a paragraph explaining why you selected that destination.

Vocabulary

engrossed, adj <i>completely absorbed in something</i>
intent, adj <i>committed, determined</i>
tarmac, n <i>a runway at an airport</i>