

©2000 Brian Floca

# The Secret School

A serialized story for newspapers

Avi, AUTHOR • Brian Floca, ILLUSTRATOR

---

DISTRIBUTED BY:

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Lesson Plans .....	4
Project Ideas .....	22
Crossword Puzzle .....	23
Word Search .....	24
Resources .....	25
Answers to Chapter Questions .....	26

# Introduction

*The Secret School* teacher's guide gives students a special opportunity to interact with literature, art, and the newspaper through this new story by well-known author Avi. The story is accompanied by illustrations from artist Brian Floca.

*The Secret School* takes place in a rural Colorado school in the 1920s. When the teacher at Elk Valley's one-room schoolhouse must leave, bringing about an early school closing, the children secretly decide to take over.

## Lesson Plans

The chapter lesson plans are divided into four parts:

**Vocabulary** identifies important vocabulary words in the chapter. Teachers may use the vocabulary instructional activities as they choose, such as for identifying phonic elements, using root words and affixes, or determining meaning from context.

**Just the Facts** questions are literal-level questions. Students can find the answers in the text.

**Let's Discuss** questions encourage students to think about what is happening in the story. One discussion question invites students to make a prediction about what is going to happen in the next chapter. The final question has students relate the events in the story to their own lives.

**In the Real World** asks students to connect events and topics in the chapter to the real world through newspaper activities.

## Project Ideas

Several long-term projects related to story topics are suggested.

## Additional Activities

A crossword puzzle and word search based on vocabulary words in the story are included.

## Resources

Internet sites and books related to the topics in the story are provided.

## Acknowledgments

This teacher's guide was developed by the Use The News Foundation in collaboration with Breakfast Serials. It was created by Dr. Sherrye Dee Garrett of Use The News. Additional assistance was provided by Dotti Flory, Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. and Michelle Eisenhour.

Use The News Foundation seeks to develop educational projects that provide resources addressing human rights issues such as diversity, character education, health and nutrition, safety, disaster preparedness, the environment, and the elimination of prejudice. Founded in August 1998, the Foundation is a nonprofit benefit corporation that fosters partnerships with schools, Newspaper in Education Programs and their business sponsors. For information, contact Dr. Betty L. Sullivan (415) 826-3154 or via e-mail: BETTYSNIE@aol.com.

*The Secret School* is syndicated by *Breakfast Serials*, an organization founded by Avi to promote reading by providing good children's literature for newspapers. For more information, contact:

Linda Wright  
Breakfast Serials  
859 South York Street  
Denver, Colorado, 80209  
Telephone: 303.777.0538  
e-mail: reader@rmi.net

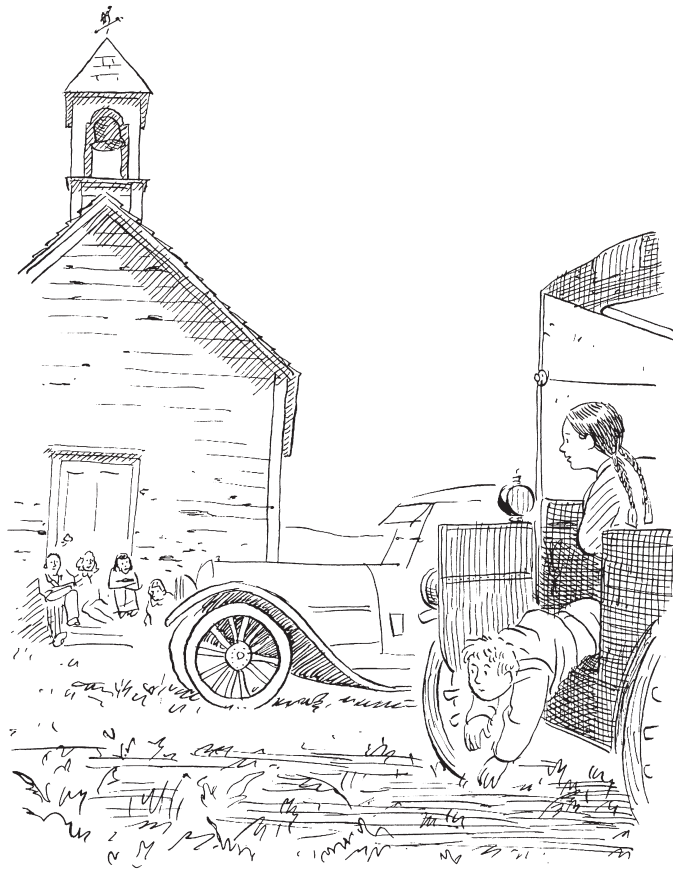
# Getting to School

## Just the Facts

1. What kind of car did Ida and Felix use to get to school?
2. What were the names of the friends who rode a mule to school?
3. Who was the school mischief-maker?

## Let's Discuss

4. Why did it take both Ida and Felix to operate the car?
5. Why did Ida and Felix have to take the car to school?
6. What did Ida and Felix use to carry their lunch to school?
7. What evidence was given to describe the quality of the school building and grounds?
8. What told you that Elk Valley was a poor and rural part of the country?
9. Make a prediction: What is the grave news?
10. How is your school different from the one in Elk Valley?



©2000 Brian Floca

## VOCABULARY

- clapboard (adj)  
narrow board siding
- Emporium (n)  
a store that carries a lot of different items
- flaxen (adj)  
a pale, soft yellow straw color
- privies (n)  
outdoor toilets
- squat (adj)  
short and close to the ground
- wheezed (v)  
made a whistling sound like someone who has trouble breathing

## *In the Real World*

Use the newspaper to find at least five items that are part of your school experience but were not available to Ida and the other Elk Valley students. Explain how those items would have changed school for the Elk Valley students.

# The Grave News

## Just the Facts

1. What was used for discipline at Elk Valley School?
2. What message was in the telegraph Miss Fletcher received?
3. What was Mr. Jordan's announcement?
4. What did Ida want to be when she finished school?



©2000 Brian Floca

## Let's Discuss

5. How many grades were represented by the children in the school?
6. What was used to heat the schoolroom?
7. Why did Mr. Jordan think the children would be happy?
8. Why were Ida and Tom upset at the news?
9. Make a prediction: What will Ida do about the school closing?
10. How would your life be affected if your school closed six weeks early?

## VOCABULARY

- aspen switch (n)  
a stick used to punish students
- chortled (v)  
laughed or chuckled in a satisfied way
- grieved (v)  
felt sorrow
- marmot (n)  
a short-legged, stout-bodied rodent with a short bushy tail and small ears
- portly (adj)  
heavy and round
- wardrobe (n)  
a large free-standing cabinet that holds clothing

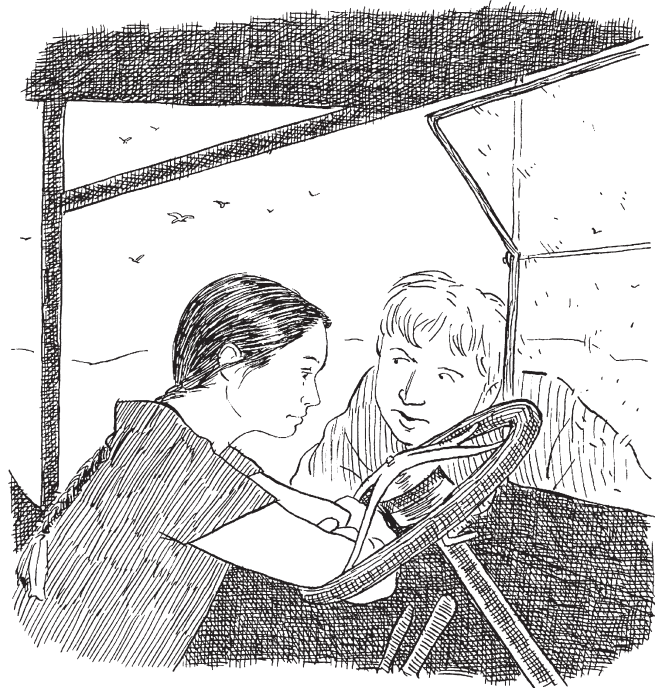
## *In the Real World*

Find a news story about an event that affects a student. Write a story describing how the student's life could be changed after the event.

# What To Do

## Just the Facts

1. How much money did Miss Fletcher make each month?
2. Where did Tom think he could learn what he needed to know about electricity and radio?
3. How did Miss Fletcher announce the end of recess to the students?



©2000 Brian Floca

## Let's Discuss

4. Where did Tom think he could find out about a correspondence course?
5. Why did Miss Fletcher delay ending recess?
6. Why would it cost money for Ida to attend high school in town?
7. What did Tom overhear Miss Fletcher say about Ida?
8. Why did Tom think Ida could become the school's teacher?
9. Make a prediction: What will help Ida make up her mind about being the teacher?
10. What kind of obstacles can interfere with someone's opportunity to get a better education?

## VOCABULARY

- churning (v)  
moving around in circles
- correspondence course (n)  
a course of study offered through the mail
- dejected (adj)  
depressed
- flapper (n)  
a young woman who acted in independent and free ways
- peeved (adj)  
annoyed and resentful

## *In the Real World*

If your school suddenly closed and you had to find a way to continue your education, what would you do? Find people, private schools, or services in the newspaper that would help you continue your education.