

Inside the Maize Maze

by Sharon Holt

photographs by Anthony Russell

Overview

This text begins with an explanation about mazes and then recounts the narrator's experience of being inside a maize maze. There is another example of a maze on the inside back cover. There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2006*.

Suggested purposes

This text supports the comprehension strategies of making connections, visualising, and analysing and synthesising. It provides excellent opportunities for learning and practising strategies for working out unfamiliar vocabulary.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the mix of text forms
- the use of short sentences focusing on one main idea
- the subject-specific vocabulary — “dead ends”, “direction”, “exit”, “lifeguard”, “maze”, “maize”, “platform”, “stalks”
- the paragraph on page 6 that marks the transition from the explanation to the personal recount
- the techniques the writer uses to connect with the audience:
 - the opening question addressed to the reader
 - the use of the first-person narrator
 - the inclusion of the narrator's personal experience
- the use of repetition for effect — “We turned right. We turned left” (page 8), “maize, maize, maize” (page 9)
- the design features — borders, inset photographs, captions, the thought bubble, the speech bubbles, the different types of images, and the multiple illustrations per page.

Possible challenges

- the homophones “maize” and “maze”.

Introducing the text

Tell the children that you have a book about mazes for them to read. Encourage them to share what they know about mazes. You could reread *The Gardener's Maze* (Green) and try out the maze on the inside back cover. *Why do people like to go into mazes? What makes mazes tricky?*

Explain that one of the mazes in the new book is made of maize and show the children the photograph on the front cover. Discuss the coincidence of the two words sounding the same.

Briefly explain the structure of the book and clarify the purpose for the reading, for example: In this text, there are lots of new words about mazes. We'll talk about them a bit as we go, but after the reading, I want you to talk about the ways you worked out the meaning of those words. Have the children jot down the new words as they come across them.

During the reading

Read the names of the author and the photographer.

Title page — Clarify that this is a photograph of a maze.

Ask the children to read the text silently, pausing at various points for discussion or to clarify any difficulties.

Page 2 — *Why has the author started this book with a question?* Draw out the idea that this is a way of gaining the reader's attention and encouraging them to read on.

Page 3 — You could model processing strategies: I think "dead ends" probably means there's no way out, like a dead-end street. I'll check the photo and read the last two sentences again to see if that seems right ...

Pages 4 and 5 — Share what you have found out about mazes with a partner. Have you ever been in mazes like these?

Page 6 — How has the text changed on this page? Why is the word "maize" in bold print? Talk about the purpose of the inset photograph. What does this show you?

Page 7 — The children should be able to use their knowledge of "talks" or "walks" to work out "stalks". Refer them to the photograph if they're unsure what stalks are. *I'm thinking about why they need to carry flags ...*

Pages 8 and 9 — Use the series of photographs across the top of these pages to help the children imagine what it's like inside the maize. Then have the children read the text. *What has the writer done to let you know there's lots of maize? What's the girl thinking? Do you think they'll find their way out?*

Pages 10 to 12 — Were you right about what the girl was thinking? How is she feeling now?

Share-read the information on the inside back cover together.

Refer back to the introductory discussion. *Why do people go into mazes?* Draw out the idea that it's fun, even when it's a bit scary, and that people like to set themselves a challenge.

Write the new words on the whiteboard and talk about how the children tried to work them out, referring back to the text. You could use some of the following prompts or questions.

- Read me the bit that tells you what a maze is.
- How did you work that out? Look at the words around it. Does that make sense?
- Could it be "lifeguard"? Where else have you seen a lifeguard?

- That's right, the word is "platform". What's a platform? Look closely at the photograph. Why does the lifeguard need to be on a platform?

Note the strategies the children have used, for example, decoding, cross-checking, and making connections to their background knowledge, the surrounding text, and/or the illustrations.

After the reading

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text with a partner, observing their confidence and how they manage the subject-specific vocabulary.

Review the structure of the text, perhaps recording it as a diagram on the whiteboard. Focus on the linking paragraph on page 6. Draw out the idea that the text is moving from an explanation about all sorts of mazes to a recount about one particular maze, in effect giving an example of what it's like to be in a maze.

Focus on the features of the explanation (pages 2–5). You could talk about the introduction, the use of definitions, and the short sentences focusing on one main idea.

Focus on the style of the recount. *How does the author help us to imagine what being in the maze was like?* You could talk about the way she shares her feelings, the use of exclamation marks for impact, and the repetition that emphasises the feeling of being lost.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2006*.

Have the children design a maze based on one of the ideas in the book. They could make the maze out of blocks, then give oral or written instructions to a partner for how to get through it.

The children could use the school library or the Internet to find out more about mazes. Use pages 2–5 as a model for an explanation during shared writing.