



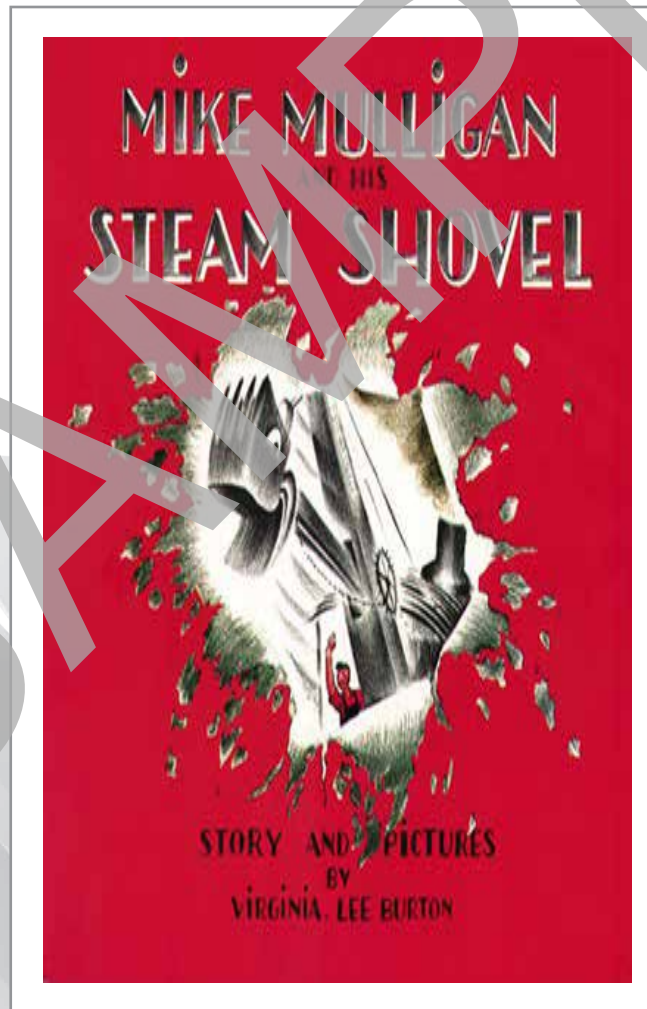
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES K-3

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

Virginia Lee Burton



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

Virginia Lee Burton

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming

Comprehension

Predicting

Literary Elements

Characterization, story
elements

Listening/Speaking

Interviewing

Summary

Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel, Mary Anne, are out of work, having been replaced by newer models of shovels. They go to the little town of Popperville and make a deal to dig the cellar for the new town hall in just one day, or they will get no pay. In the rush to dig the cellar, they forget to leave a way out! A little boy suggests a solution and Mike and Mary Anne happily settle into a new job.

About the Author

Virginia Lee Burton was born in Newton Center, Massachusetts, on August 30, 1909. She made her home in Folly Cove, Gloucester, Massachusetts, and died in 1968.

Burton studied ballet privately in San Francisco, California, and studied art at the California School of Fine Arts as well as the Boston Museum School.

She was a swimming instructor and art counselor at the Young Men's Christian Association summer camps. She became a sketcher for music, dance, and theater sections of the *Boston Transcript* from 1928 to 1931.

The subject matter of her books, with few exceptions, is drawn directly from life. She would draw her books first and then write the text. She would pin her sketches on the walls of her studio, so that she could see the book as a whole. She would do a rough dummy of the book, make the final drawings, and then type the text. Burton won the Caldecott Medal for the best-illustrated book for children in 1943 for her book, *The Little House*.

She worked with her sons to adjust stories to their interest. They became a barometer for her writing.

Initiating Activities

You may choose to do one of the following activities before reading the story and others after the story has been read. However, they are appropriate at any time.

1. Ask if anyone has a toy earthmover. If so, ask if it can be brought into school. The child bringing in the toy could explain how it works. Demonstrate, if possible. Put the toys on display. Categorize them by function.
2. Locate a nearby area where earthmovers may be observed at work. Invite in people to interview that have something to do with earthmovers.
3. Ask each child to make an earthmover for the bulletin board. This may be done with art media or with "throwaways." Put on display.

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4. The steam shovel is based on the lever, a simple machine. Tell the children that they have levers, too. Their arm is a lever. If a heavy book is lifted and the elbow is bent, the fulcrum is at the elbow. If the book is lifted with the arm straight, the fulcrum is at the shoulder. Allow the children to try both and discover if it is easier to lift the load when the fulcrum is close to it.
 5. Read the poem, "Steam Shovel" to the students. Note the comparison to the dinosaur. Discuss the poem and the reason for the comparison. Brainstorm other comparisons and list them. (Hopkins, Lee Bennett: *Poetry On Wheels*, Garrard Publishing Company, 1974, Champaign, Illinois.)
 6. Use the graphic organizers on pages 5–10 to help the students become active readers of the novel and to better understand its characters and structure.

SAMPLE

Using Predictions

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how a conflict will be resolved, which details will be important to the plot, which details will help fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses as they read the novel.

As students work on their predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give to help us make predictions? Why are some predictions more likely to be accurate than others?

Create a chart for recording predictions. This could be either an individual or class activity. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, students can review and correct their previous predictions about plot and characters as necessary.

Use the facts and ideas the author gives.

Use your own prior knowledge.

Apply any new information (i.e., from class discussion) that may cause you to change your mind.

Predictions

Pages 1–10

Vocabulary

steam 3
through 5
straightened 8

shovel 3
mountains 7

beautiful 3
curves 8

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. What is a steam shovel? (*A steam shovel is an earthmoving machine. See the Teacher Information section at the end of this guide for more details.*)
2. What are some things that you think Mike did to take care of Mary Anne? (*Answers will vary.*)
3. Do you know someone who takes good care of a vehicle? What does this person do? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. On what kinds of projects did Mike and Mary Anne work? (*They dug great canals for big boats; page 7, they cut through mountains so that trains could go through; they made highways for automobiles. pp. 5–9*)
5. Why do you suppose that Mike gave Mary Anne that name? (*Opinion—answers will vary.*)
6. What would you name a steam shovel? Why? (*Answers will vary.*)
7. What do you think that the problem in this story is going to be? List and save predictions. Start a story map. (*See p. 7 of this guide.*)

Pages 11–19

Vocabulary

cellars 13
diesel 14
newspaper 17

thirty-seven 13
gravel pits 16
Popperville 17

gasoline 14
everywhere 17

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Where were the tall skyscrapers built? (*in the city, p. 13*)
2. What was used to haul the dirt away from the skyscraper sites? (*trucks, p. 13*)
3. What made Mike and Mary Anne dig faster? (*They dug faster and better when people watched them. p. 13*)
4. Why did Mike and Mary Anne lose their jobs? (*The jobs were taken away by new shovels: gasoline, electric, and diesel. p.14*)