



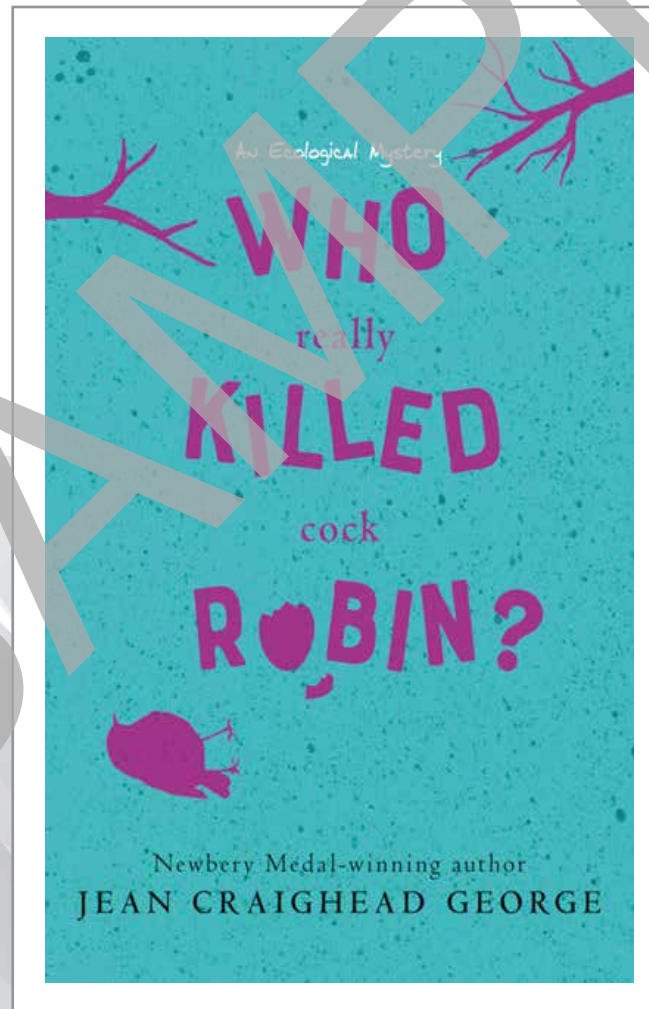
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Who Really Killed Cock Robin?

Jean Craighead George



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

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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!

ISBN 978-1-50204-327-6

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Brainstorming, classifying
and categorizing, analyzing,
interpreting, evaluating,
synthesizing

Comprehension

Predicting, summarizing,
comparison/contrast, fact
and opinion, drawing con-
clusions, cause and effect

Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms, context

Listening/Speaking

Participation in discussion
and cooperative groups,
entertainment of others with
dramatic activities

Writing

Expository, persuasive,
creative, procedural

Literary Elements

Characterization, setting,
conflict, theme, point of view

Summary

Cock Robin dies in the Mayor's yard and it's important for Tony, an eighth grade naturalist, to find out why. Saddleboro has developed a reputation as an ecology-conscious community and the Mayor doesn't want that reputation tarnished. When Cock Robin's mate built her nest on the Mayor's front porch—in his hat—the Mayor was quick to capitalize on the event by making periodic radio reports on the pair's progress. With Cock Robin's death, the Mayor wants Tony to unravel the ecological mystery and prevent political embarrassment; Tony is determined to find the culprit—even if that turns out to be the Mayor himself.

Introductory Information and Activities

Initiating Activities:

1. Have the students make predictions about the story, based on the title and cover illustration.
2. Read students the original "Cock Robin" rhyme. It begins:

" 'Who Killed Cock Robin?'
'I,' said the Sparrow,
'With my bow and arrow,
I killed Cock Robin...'"

Ask the students to predict what the original nursery rhyme has to do with this story, if anything.

3. Bulletin Board: Develop a word web for **POLLUTION**.



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4. For Discussion: What do you know about DDT? PCB's? Is pollution a problem in your community? Talk with some of the people who have lived in your community for a while. Are the same plants and animals found there as 20 years ago? Why or why not?
 5. Anticipation Guide: Have the students tell why they do or do not agree with each of the following statements:
 - a) Only people in big cities have to worry about pollution.
 - b) Clear water is always clean.
 - c) We are running out of space for garbage.
 - d) Oil spills cause most water pollution.
 - e) Pollution affects our health.
 6. Environmental Activities:
 - a) Brainstorm the word "environment." Students will develop the idea that the environment includes everything around them—people, plants, animals, water, air, streets, fields, lawns, soil, cars, buildings, and climate.
 - b) Make posters showing ways to care for the school environment. Emphasize sharing with other people and with plants and animals. Encourage students to discuss the care of school buildings, desks and materials. List ideas on charts. For each idea chosen, have students suggest a message in the form of a saying, phrase, slogan, or short sentence.

Recommended Procedure for Reading this Book:

This book will be read one section at a time, using DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity) Method. This technique involves reading a section, predicting what will happen next ("making good guesses") based on what has already occurred in the story. The students continue to read and everyone verifies the predictions. (See pages 3-4 of this guide.)

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2. Describe some of the differences between aniline dyes and natural dyes. (*Pages 126-128, Aniline or synthetic dyes poison the environment and make more garish colors; natural dyes from plants produce more natural colors and are not toxic.*)
 3. Why did NASA order Mary Alice's father to burn the cloth? Should he have followed orders? Could something like that really happen? (*Page 131, The cloth, which didn't quite do what it was supposed to, was top-secret.*)

Chapter 8: "Who Really Did Kill Cock Robin?" - Pages 135-159

Vocabulary:

conservationist 137	terrain 144	cornucopia 144
sewage disposal plant 145	fertilizer 145	accumulated 149
synthetics 152	fungicides 152	isolated 154
pyramid 155	ecosystem 156	chain effect 158
parasitic 158		

Vocabulary Activity:

Vocabulary "Bee": The teacher or student-teacher gives a definition and a student supplies the word. The game is played like a spelling bee. This may be played in cooperative groups with the student-teacher using an answer key.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do the loggers use mercuric oxide? (*page 137, to take the slime off logs*)
2. Why is Tony disappointed with Rob? Would you be? (*Page 138, Rob accepts a political job because he thinks that it is more important than research.*)
3. Why does the power company use 2,4,5—T? (*page 148, to reduce weeds which interfere with low lines*)
4. Who really did kill Cock Robin? (*Pages 156-159, Sparrows, which ate mercury-tainted seeds in Florida, produced tainted parasites which attacked migrating robins, including Cock Robin.*)

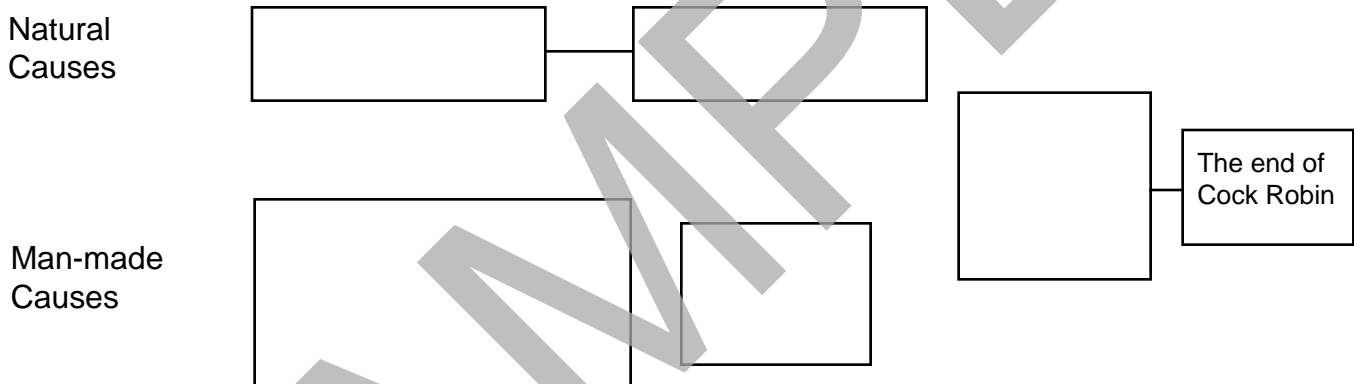
Backmapping with Cause and Effect Chains

Often, many causes contribute to one effect. By using parallel chains to “backtrack” how something happened, students get a better idea of how complex “cause” can be. They also grow in awareness that solutions to complicated problems are rarely quick and easy.

Encourage students to list all the causes they can think of for Cock Robin’s death. Then have them work in collaborative groups to find two or more “chains of events” which led to the death.

Finally, students complete a cause-effect graphic organizer together. A sample blank organizer might look like this.

Question: What killed Cock Robin?



Possible sample answers:

(In the two “natural causes” boxes: Marsh hawks eat some robins; parasites weaken some sparrows.)

(In the two “manmade causes” boxes: NASA designed fabric with poison used in robin’s nest; sparrows ate seeds treated with mercury.)

(In the third box: When the sparrows died, the parasites attacked the birds in the next wave of migration—robins.)