



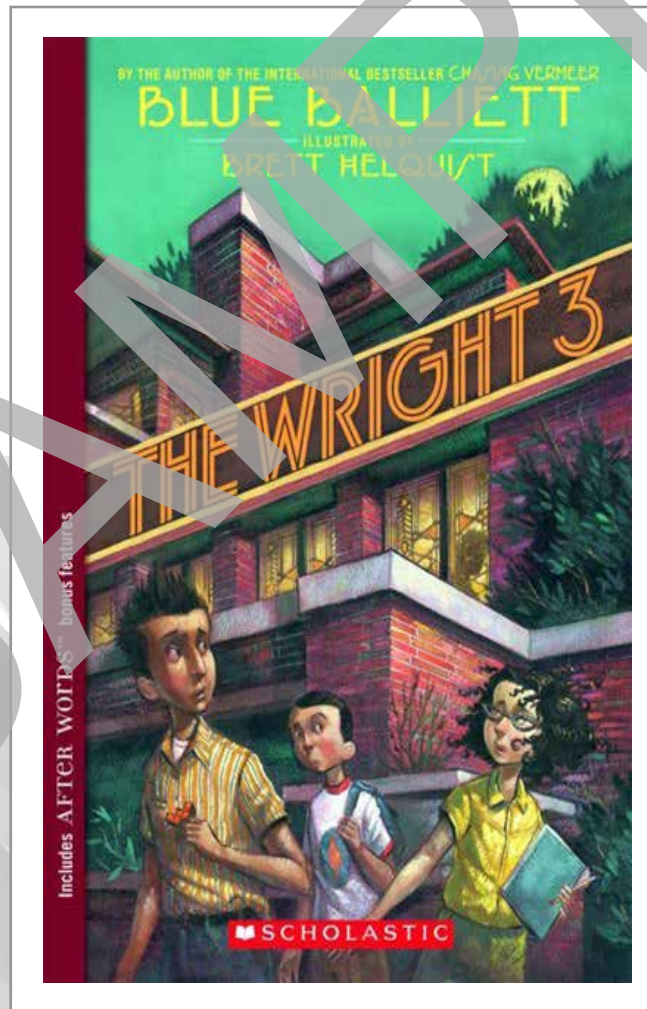
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Wright 3

Blue Balliett



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Wright 3

Blue Balliett

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, research, critical thinking, decision-making, creative thinking, cause/effect

Comprehension

Predicting, evaluating decisions, sequencing, compare/contrast

Writing

Character sketch, review, outline, art analysis/descriptions, speech

Listening/Speaking

Oral presentation, discussion

Vocabulary

Definitions, parts of speech, context clues, synonyms/antonyms

Literary Elements

Setting, conflict, characterization, point of view, theme, symbolism, figurative language, foreshadowing, climax, genre

Across the Curriculum

Art—architecture, art history, art-glass design; Math—Fibonacci numbers, pentominoes, geometry, codes; History—Robie House, Frank Lloyd Wright; Literature/Film—*Chasing Vermeer*, *The Invisible Man*, *Rear Window*

Genre: young-adult fiction; mystery

Setting: Hyde Park in Chicago, Illinois

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Themes: courage, friendship, confidence, power, art preservation

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. self, person vs. society

Tone: conversational, informative

Date of First Publication: 2006

Summary

When Tommy Segovia returns to his old neighborhood in Hyde Park, he finds, to his dismay, that his best friend Calder Pillay has befriended a girl named Petra Andalee. Ms. Hussey, their teacher, informs the class that the University of Chicago plans to tear apart the Robie House, a historic structure designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. The three sixth graders are spurred to action after realizing the value of preserving art in its original form. They form “the Wright 3” and use their unique talents of problem solving, discovering, and writing to devise a plan to save the Robie House. In the process, they stumble upon two unsuspecting burglars, a very valuable buried treasure, and mysterious, almost supernatural, aspects of the Robie House itself. Eventually, the Wright 3 are able to solve the mystery, enabling the preservation of Wright’s structure.

About the Author

Elizabeth “Blue” Balliett Klein was born in 1955 in New York City, New York. She began visiting museums as a teenager and later received a degree in art history from Brown University. She met her husband and started her family on Nantucket Island where she also wrote two books of ghost stories. In 1980, Balliett and her family moved to Chicago, where she taught third grade at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools until 2002.

Balliett’s first book, *Chasing Vermeer*, took her five years to write. It won many awards, including the 2005 Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Juvenile Fiction and the 2004 Chicago Tribune Prize for Young Adult Fiction. *The Wright 3* and *The Calder Game* are *Chasing Vermeer*’s sequels. Balliett loves writing full time and believes that art is about adventure. She likes the idea that “kids perceive connections... that grown-ups often miss,” and this idea is expressed in her writing. Among her favorite books are *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, *The Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg, *Stuart Little* by E. B. White, and *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson.

Invisible—A Find

In a bizarre accident, a crew worker falls off the roof of a building. Meanwhile, a teacher named Ms. Hussey tells her sixth-grade class about the University of Chicago's plans to dismantle the Robie House, a famous structure designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Tommy Segovia, who has recently moved back to Hyde Park, Chicago, is dismayed to find that his best friend Calder has befriended a girl named Petra. Since he lives next door to the Robie House, Tommy explores the grounds one day after school and finds a small, carved object.

Vocabulary
mason
mingled
terrace
suffocating
shrill
cicada
illusion
glory
decent
pavilion
swiveled
domestic
unprecedented
brandishing
alternative
renovation
reeling
revolutionary
archaeologist

Discussion Questions

1. What happens in Chapter One? What is unusual about the occurrence? (*A mason falls from a roof. The mason thinks that the house moved, as if shaking him off, and wonders if he heard a voice whisper to him after the fall.*)
2. How is Tommy readjusting to Hyde Park? (*Tommy does not like the appearance of his old house, the location of his new apartment building [not as close to Calder's house], and Calder's new friendship with Petra. Everything seems different, and Tommy is jealous of Calder and Petra's friendship and fame from finding a famous Vermeer painting the previous year.*)
3. What can the reader tell about Ms. Hussey from Tommy's description of her appearance, her classroom, and her teaching? (*Answers will vary, but most students will conclude that Ms. Hussey is a very unconventional teacher. She seems to have fresh ideas and interesting, creative ways of motivating her students, like placing footprints on the wall to represent their reading progress and getting them involved in current events [like the plans to dismantle the Robie House] as part of school projects. Ms. Hussey asks thought-provoking questions and encourages students to discuss and prove their own opinions.*)
4. Why is Ms. Hussey upset? What questions do her feelings raise? (*Ms. Hussey is upset because the university is planning to dismantle the Robie House and ship the pieces to different museums. Ms. Hussey considers the house itself a work of art and believes that dismantling it is "murder." Answers may vary, but Ms. Hussey's position raises the questions of how the property could be saved, whether it is still art if it is in pieces, whether architecture is art, and whether art is alive.*)
5. What happened to Tommy's stepfather and biological father? (*Tommy's stepfather was partially responsible for the theft of the Vermeer painting Petra and Calder recovered earlier in the year. He died of a heart attack before he could be arrested, which is why Tommy and his mother left New York. Tommy's biological father was studying to become an archaeologist but was killed in a political demonstration in South America when Tommy was a baby.*)
6. Evaluate Tommy's decision to sneak onto the grounds of the Robie House. (*Answers will vary. Note that Tommy is trespassing when he crosses the yellow tape. Also note that the mason fell off the roof of that house, indicating it is unsafe, though Tommy is unaware of this occurrence. Also note that Tommy is looking for a way to be respected or admired among his peers, and he hopes that living next to the famous house and finding a treasure there might make him interesting or important to his classmates.*)

7. To what does Tommy compare the Robie House? What do Tommy's comparisons show about his character? (*Tommy compares the Robie House to an untidy stack of waffles, a flat pyramid, a train car, and "one of those magic boxes where you slide a drawer out, close it, and a dollar bill disappears" [pp. 26–27]. Tommy's comparisons show that he is thoughtful, creative, and appreciative of aesthetics.*)
8. **Prediction:** What is the significance and/or value of the object Tommy finds?

Supplementary Activities

1. Figurative Language: Begin a chart of literary devices you find in the novel. Examples: **Similes**—"triangles in the art-glass panels above his head flashed like sharp teeth" (p. 3); "her braid flying out like a tail" (p. 13); "...the first-floor windows looked suddenly like an empty fishnet" (p. 32); **Metaphor**—Tommy's old house: an upside-down birthday cupcake (p. 4); **Personification**—"The building...twitching in the irritable way an animal does" (p. 3)
2. Foreshadowing: Begin making a list of possible instances of foreshadowing. Continue adding to your list as you read the novel. As the meaning of different clues or events unfold, describe whether your foreshadowing guesses were right.
3. Art: Examine and discuss the illustrations on pages 2, 5, 24, and 31.
4. Character Sketch: Pretend you are writing a play with Tommy as a main character. Create a list of character traits an actor playing the part of Tommy should have. Consider Tommy's history, emotions, talents, and interests when making your list.

Tales from the Tracks—Fear It

Petra recalls her first meeting with Tommy since he returned to Hyde Park. While running an errand for her mother, Petra picks up a free copy of *The Invisible Man*. Petra and Calder feel the impact Tommy's return has had on their friendship. Petra witnesses a strange, caped figure throwing something from a passing train. When she and Calder investigate, they find another copy of *The Invisible Man*. Tommy shares his find with Calder but not Petra. Calder discovers he can build pieces of the Robie House using his pentominoes. Mr. Dare wonders if the Robie House is trying to protect itself.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Tommy behave when he meets Petra in front of Calder's house? How does Petra feel about Tommy? (*Tommy tries to exclude Petra by bringing up old memories only he and Calder share. Petra secretly hopes that Tommy will disappear somehow, making her friendship with Calder less complicated. She is jealous of Tommy's friendship with Calder and also envies them for being only children, as she comes from a large, loud family.*)
2. How do Petra's, Calder's, and Tommy's interests reflect one or more of their parents' hobbies or occupations? (*Petra's inclination to reading and writing reflects her mother's background in poetry. Calder's obsession with problem solving and pentominoes reflects his father's city planner job [which involves putting things together in a logical way] and his mother's career teaching math. Tommy takes after his father, who was a collector and aspiring archaeologist.*)

Word Map

Definition

Synonym

Vocabulary Word

Antonym

Pronunciation

Part of Speech

Sentence

Time Line

Directions: In the numbered boxes below, write four important events that happened in Chapters Twenty-nine through Thirty-one. Include an illustration for each listed event.

A horizontal timeline consisting of a central line with arrows at both ends. Above the line are four numbered boxes (1, 2, 3, 4) for writing events. Below the line are four empty rectangular boxes for drawing illustrations. Each box is connected to the timeline by a short vertical line.

1.	2.	3.	4.