



# WHITE OUT

Written by Jacqueline Guest  
Illustrations by Brock Nicol

**TEXT TYPE:** Fiction: Narrative—Adventure Story  
**GUIDED READING LEVEL:** T

**SUMMARY:** Eager to train his Siberian huskies before an important dogsledding race, Kuvan and his dogs head out on a practice run just as white out blizzard conditions begin to develop. Only his younger brother, Alootook, knows why he might not have returned home, and where he might be found.

## FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- self-monitoring

## FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- predicting
- inferring

## ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Think-Pair-Share strategy
- sharing ideas
- discussing foreshadowing and descriptive language (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

## WORKING WITH WORDS

- language predictability: using context and background knowledge to work out word meanings
- language predictability: developing awareness of how personification conveys meaning

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- ask themselves questions to enhance comprehension and solve vocabulary queries
- think about how self-questioning aids in their understanding of a text
- use sticky notes to track and revisit where comprehension difficulties have occurred
- check personal strategy use, and engage other strategies as needed
- read between the lines, and visualize what is happening as the story unfolds

## ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Self-Monitoring Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

## TEXT FEATURES

- two-column page format (after first page)
- quotation marks
- enlarged text quotes
- italics for emphasis

## VISUAL LITERACY

- illustrations

## TEXT SUPPORTS

- sequential, high action plot with some helpful illustrations
- descriptive language of winter conditions

## POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- vocabulary related to Inuit culture and dogsledding
- pronunciation of unfamiliar words
- recognition of multi-syllabic words, e.g., 'enthusiastically,' 'roguishly,' 'unerringly,' 'excruciatingly'

## BEFORE READING

---

### Predicting and Text and Visual Literacy Features

#### **Activate and build prior knowledge**

- Explain that ‘White Out’ is a short story; and more specifically an adventure story. Ask students to do a half-minute skim of the text, pictures, and one or two enlarged text quotes. Using their background knowledge of adventure stories and the initial information from previewing the features, discuss possible story content and the meaning of the words ‘white out.’

### Inferring and Language Predictability

#### **Introduce supports and challenges**

- Note that some words in the story relate to the Inuit way of life, and particularly to dogsledding. Point out ‘wheel dog’ and ‘atigi’ on page 2 and read the sentences in which they occur. Ask students to flag unfamiliar words with sticky notes as they read the story. You might say, *Try to work the words out in context. We’ll talk about them afterwards.* Welcome inferences on word meanings and research/ explain the words if necessary (if time allows).

#### **TEACHING TIP:**

The following definitions may be helpful:

- ‘atigi:’ a pullover inner parka, with fur on the inside for warmth
- ‘wheel dog:’ dog positioned directly in front of the sled to steer around corners and trees
- ‘kamiks,’ ‘mukluks:’ boots

- Point out a section of the text that describes weather conditions and explain that these descriptions help to build a tone of growing danger in the story (e.g., top of right column on page 2). Note the use of personification as a descriptive tool the author uses on page 5 (e.g., ‘The wind was a villain...’ found in the third-last paragraph).

#### **ESL NOTE:**

An additional example of personification may be necessary to ensure comprehension of this language device for your ESL students.

### Self-monitoring

#### **Set a purpose for reading**

- Ask students to pause two or three times during their reading, to ask themselves questions about the story. The questions could be about understanding, e.g., ‘*What puzzles me?*’ or they could be ‘thick’ questions about the plot or characters, e.g., ‘*I wonder if Alooook going out alone to find his brother is a good idea.*’ (Thick and Thin questions are described in the book ‘Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding,’ by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis.) Provide sticky notes for each student and remind them to use them to flag tricky words and to jot down their questions. Asking oneself questions, as well as checking personal strategy use, is crucial in monitoring understanding.

## Self-monitoring

### **Provide for early finishers**

- Ask early finishers to discuss their sticky note entries with another early finisher, and to talk with them about the questions they asked themselves and the words they flagged.

## **DURING READING**

---

### **Monitor reading**

- Offer support when needed, e.g., *You're wondering who's talking here? (top of page 3) Well, speech is indented whenever a different person talks, so try to work this out... You're right, at the end of page 2 that's Alootook talking, Kuvan answers him, so Alootook must be the one who finishes the conversation.*
- You might offer a thick question as a prompt to check comprehension, e.g., *What's Alootook thinking as he watches his parents leave on their snowmobiles?*

### **Observe**

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the Self-Monitoring Strategy Checklist and the Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.)

## **AFTER READING**

---

### **Revisit the purpose for reading**

- Discuss the questions raised by students as they read the story. You might ask students if any of their thick questions were answered by the end of the story. As a Think-Pair-Share activity (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*) students can share their questions with a partner and discuss the characters, setting, plot, and ending through the vehicle of the questions asked so far. Ask students to think about their self-questioning, e.g., *How did it help you think more deeply about the story? Did the questions help in any other way?*
- Add prompts to encourage students to explore using different strategies, e.g., *What do you think would have happened if Alootook hadn't set out to rescue his brother? (predicting, inferring) Do you think he should have gone or was there another option? (evaluating)*

### **Check on outstanding challenges**

- If applicable, say, *I noticed that some of you were wondering what 'Kasook' means, as it pops up several times (pages 2 and 5, and the final page). Has anyone worked out what 'Kasook' refers to?... Yes, Kasook could be a region in the Arctic, where the people follow the same traditions, but does the story's closing text 'the Kasooks headed for home' add anything new to our thinking? With that 's' after 'Kasook,' it might be likely that Kasook is the boys' surname.*

- Ask students to locate remaining sticky notes placed near words or phrases that they still don't understand. Students can use on-line or library material to aid them in their search for the definitions of these words. The Iditarod® Website may be helpful as a starting point for students to check on definitions that may be unresolved.

### **Note successful strategy use**

- Consider the following example of providing positive feedback after a reading strategy has been demonstrated by a student:
  - *When Horatio was reading how Kuvan steered the dogs in the direction he wanted them to go, he was almost—but not entirely—sure that ‘gee’ meant ‘go right’ and ‘haw’ meant ‘go left’ (refer to page 2), so he flagged the words with a sticky and hoped more information would be offered later. After a few minutes he called me over. He’d figured out that ‘haw’ does mean ‘go left.’ He showed me that, at the end of page 5, Alootook shouts ‘Haw, Storm! Haw!’ and pointed out the text ‘The dog swerved left’ at the top of page 6. Horatio did a great job of reading on for more information on those words and also made a good inference by linking ‘Haw!’ with Storm turning left. Well done! It’s always useful to use stickies to remind yourself about what you need to check up on.*

## **FOCUSED REREADING**

---

Three options are provided for focused rereading in the next Guided Reading lesson. Choose an activity that meets the needs of your students, or you might select a Reader Response activity from the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*.

### **Written**

- Ask students to write their own short story about what life might hold for one or both of the boys in the next year or two. Encourage students to create some more complex sentences by combining simpler phrases and sentences into larger, fluently integrated ones.

### **Artistic**

- Create a postcard that Alootook might send to one of his Dragon’s Lair friends after next year’s under-sixteen dogsledding race.

### **Oral/dramatic**

- Ask the students to reread to see how the author foreshadows the ending of the story or how the author uses rich descriptions of the weather to build atmosphere. Discuss in partners, and then meet with the larger group to talk about findings.

**Predicting**

**Predicting and Inferring**

**Analyzing and Synthesizing**