



THE FASTEST GAME

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TEXT TYPE: Info-fiction: Personal Communication—E-mails
GUIDED READING LEVEL: U/V

SUMMARY: This series of e-mails between teammates and their lacrosse coach follows a season for the Hartsville Hounds. Two friends, Jake and Tommy, join the team when their hockey league is cancelled. While learning to play the game they begin to understand First Nations' mythology around lacrosse, and are inspired by one of the greatest lacrosse players of all time, Ross Powless.

Note: You may want to focus only on a spread or a specific feature of the text rather than covering this info-fiction text in its entirety.

TEXT FEATURES

- text written in e-mail form
- variety of fonts

VISUAL LITERACY

- photographs
- labelled diagram
- words from text form backdrop of pages

TEXT SUPPORTS

- personal communication about sport of interest to students
- e-mail format familiar to many students
- informal language between the two boys

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- sport-specific terms, e.g., 'kidney pads,' 'cross-checking,' 'deke'
- multi-syllabic words, e.g., 'nemesis,' 'disadvantage,' 'mandatory'
- following the flow of the text
- cultural awareness of First Nations

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- evaluating

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- predicting
- synthesizing

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Value Line strategy
- discussing with a partner
- discussing with a group
- oral presentation (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- word solving and building: noticing a familiar word embedded within a larger word
- language predictability: using context to work out word meanings
- language predictability: using dictionaries to solve word meanings

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- distinguish between fiction and non-fiction parts of a text
- recognize viewpoints of a text's characters
- discuss an author's bias
- use labelled diagram/photographs to assist in comprehension
- synthesize to provide brief accounts

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Evaluating Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

First Session (pages 1–5)

BEFORE READING

Predicting

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Have students read through the first two e-mails on the first page with you. Ask them to identify the two boys, and infer the connection they share. Ask, *What do Jake and Tommy have in common? What do you think the two boys will do now that their ball hockey league's division has been cancelled?*

Making Connections: Text to Self

- Ask students to think about the sport of lacrosse. Ask what they already know about the sport. Ask them to share their personal experiences with team or league sports, such as hockey or soccer. Ask, *What are some of the common moves or manoeuvres? Say, As we read we can think about the different game tactics that Coach Carl mentions and learn more about this sport.*

ESL NOTE: Lacrosse may be an unfamiliar sport for some of your ESL students. In order to build on context and prior knowledge you may wish to have on display some equipment related to lacrosse, such as a helmet, shoulder pads, or sticks, or you might wish to have a few reference books with pictures available.

Making Connections: Text to World

Introduce supports and challenges

- Tell students, *Coach Carl is very keen to motivate the boys to become effective team players. To do this he teaches them about Ross Powless, a legendary Mohawk lacrosse player with incredible talent and leadership. As we read this text we are going to learn more about Powless and the traditions around the game of lacrosse for First Nations people.*

Text Features and Sequencing

- Explain to students that this text is written as a series of e-mails, over the course of a lacrosse league's season. Ask students, *What are some of the key features of e-mails?* Look at the two e-mail messages on the first page together, and point out the subject lines: 'From,' 'Date,' 'To,' and 'Subject.' Ask, *Why is it important to look at these features?* Tell students that in this text, they will need to be able to identify who the e-mails are sent to and who they are from, as well as the dates, since they span several months.
- Tell students that they will encounter specific words associated with lacrosse, while reading this text. They may be familiar with sports terminology from participating in, or watching, other sports. Point out the terms 'cross-checking' and 'slashing' in Jake's e-mail on page 3. Begin a list of sports terminology, which students can add to as they come across examples of them in the text.

Visual Literacy Features and Analyzing

Word Solving and Building

Language Predictability

Evaluating

- Ask students to look at the diagram and photographs on pages 2 and 3. Ask, *What can we learn from them? How much new information can we find in the labels?* Students can examine the diagram, photographs, and labels to find extra information, which can help with understanding what is described in the e-mails.
- Ask students what strategies they can use to figure out the meaning of other unfamiliar multi-syllabic words. Encourage them to identify strategies such as finding words they know within the larger word, then rereading the sentence.
- Read the last sentence of the second paragraph on page 2 with students: ‘Your hockey helmets with cages will do just fine; but remember, in lacrosse mouth guards are mandatory!’ Ask if they can predict the meaning of the word ‘mandatory’ from the context in which it appears in the sentence. Have dictionaries available as a resource and invite students to look up the word. Ask, *Do we always have to look up words in a dictionary if we are not sure what they mean? Say, Don’t forget, we can often predict a word’s meaning from the sentence or paragraph that surrounds it. Sometimes it is just as helpful to do that, and to use a dictionary if we think a particular word is stopping us from really understanding a sentence.*

Set a purpose for reading

- Tell students that, as they are reading, they should be thinking about what parts of this text are fiction and which, if any, are non-fiction. Provide students in the group with two different colours of sticky notes: one colour to represent fictional aspects of the text and the other colour to represent possible examples of non-fiction. Say to them, *As you read, place your sticky notes over parts you think are fiction and parts you believe could be non-fiction. Later on, we will talk more about where we placed our sticky notes.*

Provide for early finishers

- As students finish reading, they can pair up with another early finisher and discuss their sticky note flags. They should be able to explain why they have marked their textual examples as they have. They should also be able to add some sports terminology to the list already started.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- As they read independently, have each student read a portion of the text aloud to you. Assist them with unfamiliar wording and vocabulary as required. Offer prompts to help students solve problems as they read. For example, ask: *Can you read on to solve the word? Have you tried rereading to solve that word? Do you think you need to use a dictionary here or can you figure out this word’s meaning by thinking about its context first?*

- To check on comprehension skills, you might question an individual student’s understanding of what he or she has read so far, e.g., *What do you think Coach Carl means when he says ‘I think it would be a grand idea if we looked to Ross for inspiration to guide us through our first season’?* (page 2) *What can you infer from Tommy’s comment, ‘Finally, I get to throw my weight around’?* (page 3)

ESL NOTE: Keep your ESL students in mind at this stage, being sure to monitor their comprehension of the task, word solving, and how well they are maneuvering through the layout and—in particular—the form of the text (e-mails).

Observe

- Make observations regarding students’ abilities to evaluate the text. Can they look at an issue, such as the cancellation of the PeeWee division, and see it from the point of the view of those administering the ball hockey league? Can they think about Coach Carl’s suggestion that the team look to Ross Powless for inspiration from Tommy’s and Jake’s perspectives?
- Observe students’ abilities to make connections to the text. Can they use their personal knowledge or experience to involve themselves more in the text? For example, when Coach Carl begins to assign the team members different animals, can they explain why this might be a powerful motivation for members of the team using any relatable experiences they might have had?
- Note students’ successful use of reading strategies and any difficulties they encounter.
- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the *Evaluating Strategy Checklist* and the *Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record* in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*)

AFTER READING

Revisit the purpose for reading

- As a Value Line activity (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*) pose the following topic statement to students: *‘The Fastest Game’ contains only fictional information.* Students should then indicate where on the Value Line they stand: ‘Strongly Support,’ ‘Strongly Oppose,’ or ‘Not sure.’ As a group, discuss reasons for their responses. Students should refer to their sticky note flags to support their answers.

Check on outstanding challenges

- Discuss and clarify any challenges students experienced in completing these tasks. What did they find easy? What did they find difficult? Were

Evaluating

they able to explain their reasons for flagging the text with stickies as they did? If some students found this difficult, ask others to share their own examples.

- Revisit any challenging words students encountered and discuss the strategies they used to figure them out. Have students share with the reading group which strategies they found most successful for helping to solve unfamiliar or new words. Afterwards, you may want to reflect on these responses and point out that different strategies are effective in different situations.

Note successful strategy use

- Provide feedback to students on their ability to find the main points and synthesize the text so far. If there is a specific example where a student has clearly synthesized the text ask the student to explain how he or she developed their idea. Alternatively, share an example of your own, such as: *Tommy and Jake are very disappointed when they first hear that their PeeWee ball hockey division has been cancelled. However, by the time just three weeks have passed, they have immersed themselves into the world of lacrosse. They have already learned a tremendous amount, not just about the game and strategy, but also about the powerful traditions surrounding the sport, and how it has fostered a legacy of sporting excellence, and a real sense of pride, among people of the First Nations. There is more to this game than simply playing in an arena... This is an example of synthesizing what you've read to come up with a new insight not directly stated within the text.*

Second Session (page 6–end)

Predicting and Making Connections: Text to Self

BEFORE READING

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Say, *At the end of page 5, Coach Carl relates his idea of assigning animals to the lacrosse team members in an effort to help them tap into their own power. Can you predict Jake and Tommy's reaction? Do you think that they are going to be motivated by this, or do you think it might put them off the game?* Ask students to explain their responses. They should be encouraged to use evidence from the text so far to support their explanations. Ask, *Has a coach, or perhaps a teacher, ever used what seemed like an unusual idea to motivate you?* Students can share any similar experiences they have had, and its impact on their individual success or the success of a team or group. Ask if students think Coach Carl's idea will make a difference to the team's performance.

ESL NOTE: You may wish to have your ESL students share their ideas on motivation from their culture and relate this back to the ideas shared by other students, being sure to make relevant connections.

**Text and Visual Literacy
Features**

Evaluating

Introduce supports and challenges

- Do a walk-through of the remainder of the text. Look at the words highlighted on the background of page 7 together. Add any of these or other words seen in the background of the text's pages to the list of sports terminology started in the previous session.

Set a purpose for reading

- Explain, *Now you have time to read from page 6 to the end of the text.* Tell students that as they are reading they should try to imagine the thoughts and feelings of the characters in the story. Say to students, *Ask yourselves: 'Can I see this situation from the characters' points of view? If I were in their position, what would I think about how things were unfolding as the season went on?'*

Provide for early finishers

- Encourage students who finish early to write a few sentences in response to the following statement: *The lacrosse season was a good learning experience for Jake and Tommy.* They can jot their thoughts and opinions down in their reader's notebooks.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- As they read independently, have each student read a portion of the text aloud to you. As in the first session, assist students with unfamiliar wording and vocabulary as needed.
- To check on comprehension, you might question an individual student's understanding of what he or she has read, e.g., *How did Ross get his first stick, despite money being tight? What are some of the challenges in playing lacrosse? Are they the same for every player? How does Coach Carl use Ross Powless as a role model for his team to learn from? Can you show me an example?*

Observe

- Make observations regarding students' abilities to offer insightful evaluations and explain their thinking using examples from the text. Continue to take note of students' successful use of reading strategies and difficulties they encounter.
- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the Evaluating Strategy Checklist and the Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*)

AFTER READING

Evaluating

Revisit the purpose for reading

- Create a three-column chart organizer with the headings seen below on a classroom board or on chart paper. As a group, revisit Jake’s final e-mail on page 11, and Coach Carl’s final message on the last page of the text. Use the chart to examine the characters’ viewpoints on various aspects of the lacrosse season. Students can begin filling in the chart in any of these columns (i.e., students can offer their thoughts on a character’s point of view and then fill in the other columns—the first column does not necessarily have to be filled in first).

Aspects of the season	Coach Carl’s point of view	Jake’s point of view
e.g., hard work	–Suggests applying it in other aspects of life, e.g., work	
e.g., coach’s hat with loon feather	–Happy that the team chose the loon as his animal	–Feels good about the pre-game loon howling
e.g., teamwork		

Check on outstanding challenges

- As a group, discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary students encountered in the text, starting with the list of sports terms started in the first session. Use the strategies identified in previous discussions (context clues, identifying words within a larger word, using a dictionary, rereading) as well as group feedback to clarify meaning and confirm understanding.

Note successful strategy use

- Invite students to share their own examples of what they do as readers to understand the text. Provide an example of good use of a reading strategy that you observed.

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

Evaluating and Synthesizing

- Have students research more about Ross Powless and write a short synthesis of his achievements. Direct them to find as much first-hand reporting as they can, for example, people’s thoughts and accounts

of him quoted in newspaper or magazine articles. They should concentrate on summarizing his achievements. They should also be encouraged to evaluate their source materials carefully to determine an author's perspective or bias. While writing it is important for students to keep in mind the following questions: How are Aboriginal people portrayed in the sources I've used in my report? Are they different than in 'The Fastest Game'? If so, how?

- Alternatively, students might want to research another well known First Nations sports personality, and share their story in the form of a biography, e.g., Carey Price of the Montreal Canadiens, or those recognized in the BC Sports Hall of Fame and Museum for their dedication to First Nations sports in British Columbia.

Artistic

Synthesizing

- Have students design a poster targeted at young people that advertises joining a league lacrosse team. They should include information about the game, and the skills and teamwork required to be a member of a lacrosse team.

Oral/dramatic

Evaluating and Synthesizing

- In pairs, students can put together an oral account of the life of Ross Powless, and share it with the group. The guidelines should be similar to those for Focused Rereading's first written task, with an emphasis on synthesizing his accomplishments and evaluating how Aboriginal people are portrayed in the media. Students might choose to present their account in the form of an interview, with a student answering questions as Powless.