



STOP THE PRESS!

Written by Jeff Szpirglas

TEXT TYPE: Fiction: Narrative—Fantasy Novella
GUIDED READING LEVEL: Y/Z

SUMMARY: This fantasy novella is about a newspaper editor’s sinister plot to take control of the world’s media and its readers. ‘The Editor’ has created a special ink that distorts the truth and brainwashes the general public. Tasfia, a writer for her school newsletter, discovers The Editor’s plot. Luckily, she is impervious to the ink’s special powers. However, she must elicit support from you, the reader, to foil The Editor’s evil plan—before it’s too late.

TEXT FEATURES

- chapters
- italicized text
- symbols indicate change in time
- variety of punctuation, including ellipses, dashes, hyphens

VISUAL LITERACY

- graphics on front/back cover

TEXT SUPPORTS

- engaging story
- chapters

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- challenging vocabulary (e.g., ‘sepia,’ ‘moniker,’ ‘chagrin,’ ‘Hone,’ ‘mottled,’ ‘antiquated’)
- recognizing time shifts

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- analyzing

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- making connections: text to text, text to world
- self-monitoring

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Ranking Ladder strategy
- Inside-Outside-Circle strategy
- discussing with a partner
- discussing with a group
- Radio Show (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- word solving and building: using meaning connections to solve unfamiliar words
- language predictability: using context to work out word meanings
- language predictability: idiomatic expressions
- language predictability: using dictionaries to solve word meanings

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student’s ability to:

- analyze text for information
- recognize problems that occur in the story
- use information from the text to provide evidence for ideas
- identify and discuss features of a fantasy story and novella
- self-monitor to repair comprehension when it breaks down

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Analyzing Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

First Session (pages 3–19)

BEFORE READING

Making Connections: Text to Text

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Tell students that this text is a ‘fantasy novella.’ Encourage them to share with the group what they know about the fantasy genre. In groups of three or four, ask students to brainstorm and list the key components of a fantasy story (e.g., good versus evil, often set in different eras, an element of magic or supernatural powers, highly imaginative, and so on) using the Ranking Ladder strategy (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*). Invite students to think about books or movies in the fantasy genre that they may already be familiar with (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings*, *Eragon*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and so on). After groups have had a chance to rank their results, each group can select one member to share their group’s top three ideas with the larger reading group.

ESL NOTE: Have copies of several fantasy texts on hand if possible. Show students images from the covers or inside the texts. Students can describe the different fantasy elements contained in the images or illustrations (e.g., a hero flying through the air, a wizard making a potion, an animal that talks, and so on).

Text Features

- Discuss with students what they think a novella is. With students, identify some of the features of a novella (a fiction narrative that is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel). Have students read any texts they think might be a novella?

Predicting and Analyzing

- Hand out copies of the book and ask students to look at the front and back covers. Ask students to predict what this book will be about based on the title, graphics, and blurb on the back cover. Discuss the meaning of the term ‘mass media’ and encourage students to share examples of what they think the ‘mass media’ is. In partners, ask students to analyze the graphics on the front and back covers carefully and predict what the red splotches might be (i.e., ink, blood, spilled juice). Ask students what they think the mysterious splotches, title, newspaper-style background, and back cover blurb’s information might suggest about the story.

Introduce supports and challenges

Word Solving and Building

- Ask students: *Can anyone tell me what the editor of a smaller newspaper might be responsible for? Who here has heard of this type of job? Can we use the word ‘edit’ to think about what an editor of a small newspaper might do?* Students should begin this novella with a general understanding of the role an editor plays at a small newspaper.

Text Features and Sequencing

Self-monitoring and Language Predictability

Analyzing

- With students, turn to page 4 of the text. Remind students that authors and publishers use different headings, fonts, and symbols to help organize texts. In partners, ask students to discuss what they think the three stars between the two sections of text on this page mean. Lead them to the understanding that these stars act as a section break, to indicate a change in time. In this case, we are going back in time to events that occurred two weeks earlier. On page 5, the stars represent a jump forward in time.
- Tell students that as they read, they might encounter words they are not familiar with. Ask students to turn to page 3 and direct their attention to the word ‘moniker.’ Invite students to share what strategies they could use to figure out the meaning of this word. Encourage them to identify strategies such as: rereading the sentence, making connections to what they already know, skipping the word and then going back, or using context clues to help them figure it out. As students read, ask them to record any words that they are unsure of and the page number that word is on. Check on difficult words in the After Reading portion of this session.

Set a purpose for reading

- As students read the first 19 pages of the novella, supply them with sticky notes and ask them to put a sticky in the text wherever they identify a problem that characters experience in the story. Students should be prepared to explain what information from the text led them to believe that they have identified a problem. They should be able to cite one or two points of support from the text.

Provide for early finishers

- Encourage students who finish early to reread the parts of the text where they have identified the problems from the first part of the story. Remind early finishers that they should be ready to support their examples with specific information from the text (one or two points).

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- Ask students to read to the end of page 19 independently and encourage them to think about their purpose for reading. Again, remind them to record any vocabulary they are unfamiliar with and the corresponding page number.
- As they read independently, have each student read a portion of the text aloud to you. Assist students with unfamiliar wording as required. Encourage them to look for word parts they know within a larger word, reread tricky words and phrases, and continue to use context clues to help solve unfamiliar words.

- To check comprehension, ask students to share with you one of the problems they have identified. You might want to offer prompts, using questions such as: *Why do you think that is a problem? What in the story made you think that? Can you show me evidence from the text that supports your finding?*

Observe

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

AFTER READING

Analyzing

Revisit the purpose for reading

- With partners, students talk about the problems they identified from the text. Using the information students have identified, have them complete a second Ranking Ladder list, where they rank the problems from most important to least important. Have students refer to their sticky notes. Once each partnership has created their ladder of problems they've identified, have them share with the rest of the group, citing specific evidence from the text to support their responses. If the groups don't agree on what the biggest problem in the story is, have each partnership explain the rationale for their choices, with the goal of reaching a general consensus among the Guided Reading group. Ask that students keep their Ranking Ladder list on hand, for reference in the second session.

Check on outstanding challenges

- Review and discuss any challenges students experienced in completing the task of identifying and ranking the problems in the story. What did they find easy? What did they find challenging?
- How are students faring with words like 'moniker' and 'sepia' (page 9), and 'mechanized' (page 17)? Revisit any challenging words students encountered and discuss the strategies they used to figure them out. Have students find the word in the book and discuss which strategies students found most useful for solving unfamiliar words. Elicit from students that different strategies are effective in different situations. Have students share how they arrived at meanings for unfamiliar words. Praise effective use of reading strategies and correct any misinterpretations of word meaning.
- Use your observations to discuss any ongoing comprehension challenges students are experiencing.

Note successful strategy use

- As students share ideas with their partner and with the larger group,

provide feedback about their ability to support their ideas with information from the text. Praise students who were particularly effective at using evidence from the text to support their findings.

- Acknowledge students who went back and reread or stopped to question when they realized meaning had broken down. Point out that strong readers monitor their comprehension as they read. They know when something doesn't make sense and use appropriate strategies to help them figure out their issue.

Second Session (pages 20–38)

Analyzing and Evaluating

Predicting

Evaluating

Language Predictability

BEFORE READING

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Start this session by reviewing with students the problems they have identified in the story so far. Have them refer to their Ranking Ladder results to remind them what they thought were the most important problems and how they arrived at their conclusions.
- Using the Inside-Outside-Circle strategy (see Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*), have students respond to each of the following questions with a partner, rotating partners as a new question is asked: *What do you think has happened to Mr. Glick? Do you think The Editor is involved in his disappearance? What do you think The Editor is going to do with his persuasive ink that ‘could spell danger in the wrong hands?’ (page 19) What do you think is going to happen to Tasfia?*
- Students should individually record what they think Tasfia should do now that she knows The Editor’s ink only prints lies and that most readers believe what is written. Once students have recorded their own suggestions, have them work in partners to come up with a plan for Tasfia to follow. Briefly discuss each partnered group’s plan.

Introduce supports and challenges

- Direct students’ attention to the expression, ‘the thin end of the wedge,’ on page 20. Discuss with them what they think this expression means. Remind them to consider the context of the sentence. Lead students to understand that it alludes to a problem that starts out small but is likely to get much bigger. Ask students to consider the novella’s title, and offer their thoughts on what this expression means and in what circumstances it is used.
- Point out challenging words such as ‘derision’ and ‘diatribe’ on page 23. Ask students, *How would you go about reading these words? What strategies would you use to decode them? What do they mean?* It is

important to stress that reading includes thinking about meaning. In addition to being able to read the words, students need to understand their meaning. If, through discussion and looking at context, students are still unable to determine the meaning of words like ‘derision’ and ‘diatribe,’ direct them to a print or on-line dictionary. Then revisit these words in the context of their sentences and discuss with students if they better understand the meaning of these words.

Analyzing

Set a purpose for reading

- As students read to the end, ask them to identify places in the text that describe The Editor’s plan and how he expects to execute it.

Provide for early finishers

- Ask students to list any examples (books, comics, movies, TV shows, and so on) that they can think of that have a similar theme of a sinister figure manipulating the public from the shadows. Early finishers can add their responses to a list on a class board.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- As they read to the end of the book, invite individual students to read portions of the text aloud to you. To check their understanding, ask them what they think The Editor is planning on doing and how he is going to ensure that his plan works.

Observe

- Observe and listen to students as they read the text, assisting with word solving strategies, vocabulary, and fluency as required. Provide prompts encouraging students to use a variety of decoding strategies to solve unfamiliar words. Invite students to explain what strategies they find effective to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.

AFTER READING

Analyzing

Revisit the purpose for reading

- In partners, have students share what they think The Editor’s plan was and how he planned on executing it. Encourage students to go back into the text and provide evidence to support their thinking.
- Ask the same partners to discuss what they think the most important overall idea in the story is. Once they have had a chance to share with each other, have each pair share their ideas with the larger group.

Check on outstanding challenges

- Review and discuss any challenges students experienced in identifying The Editor’s plan or how he anticipated executing it. Encourage students to show you the information from the text that helped them reach their conclusion. Provide a helpful prompt if they are struggling to ascertain The Editor’s plan, e.g., *What key words or ideas are you looking for?*
- Revisit any challenging words students encountered and discuss the strategies they used to figure them out. Have students find the word in the book and discuss which strategies students found most successful for helping them solve unfamiliar words. You want to elicit from students that different strategies are effective in different situations, and that being able to read a word doesn’t always ensure that its meaning is clear. Say, *Understanding what a word means—not simply having the ability to pronounce it—is important for growing as a strong reader and enjoying a story.*

Note successful strategy use

- Highlight students who were able to successfully solve the meaning of a word, e.g., *I liked the way Rachel figured out that the word ‘impervious’ (page 24) essentially meant ‘unaffected’ by using the context clues in the sentence. She reread the sentence a couple of times, thought about what was being said, and said she was pretty sure of the meaning of ‘impervious.’ And she’s right!*

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

- Students can assume the role of Tasfia and on coloured paper write a blog that exposes The Editor’s plan. They should include the name of the paper, describe the special qualities of the ink, and explain the power that the ink holds over most of its readers, and towards what purpose it is being used. Encourage students to also include features of a blog, such as its name, Web address, date and time of the posting, comments by others, and so on.

**Synthesizing and Making
Connections: Text to Text**

**Analyzing and
Self-monitoring**

Artistic

- Tasfia prints flyers describing The Editor’s plan and in the flyers she appeals for help to stop him. Invite students to create their own flyer outlining the problem and proposing a way to help. Remind students that flyers need to be eye-catching, and in order to be appealing they should not contain too much written information. The flyer should get its point across with limited text and interesting visual ‘hooks.’

Oral/dramatic

- The following can be used as a Radio Show activity (see Fluency Activities in the *Grade 6 Literacy Support Guide*). For Tasfia to be successful at stopping The Editor, she needs to reach and warn a large number of people. In partners, have students conduct an ‘on-air’ interview where Tasfia has the opportunity to tell her version of the story and answer ‘call-in’ questions. To begin, students write an introduction for Tasfia and the interviewer, including a short summary of the events and a plea from Tasfia to listeners to rally against The Editor’s plot. Partners will then write questions and answers for the actual interview, incorporating examples and ideas from the text into the content. Partners can then decide who will be the interviewer and who will be Tasfia. Classmates could be encouraged to ‘call in’ and ask for clarification or ask any questions they might have. As an option, students might also choose to have someone play The Editor, so that both Tasfia and The Editor have a chance to share their version of events. If this option interests students, groups of three should write content that includes a summary of the events and a defence delivered by The Editor. Students should read and speak with fluency and appropriate expression and pacing. They should tape record practice sessions, noting areas of their performance that can be improved on.