

Block 1:

The main goals of our plan were twofold: we wanted to add variety to the literature selection in our reading program; and, we wanted to ignite our students' inspiration and love of all types of literature. We could not have chosen a better author than Chris Van Allsburg to use as our focus for the plan. His books are wonderful! Each one reflects Van Allsburg's unique surrealistic style, yet is completely different and unpredictable. Both stories and illustrations are enticing to the reader, and together they provide enriching literacy experiences that foster a deeper love of books and reading. From an educational standpoint, each book lends itself to an endless number of opportunities to teach language and reading skills in a variety of meaningful context.

With Chris Van Allsburg's writing as a model, students have numerous opportunities for transacting with text and composing text. "Skillfulness" is built into the meaningful context and rich language of each story and our students will become adept investigators of language. Students will extend their own reading and writing throughout all curriculum areas.

The four books we have chosen by Chris Van Allsburg to do our author study around are as follows: *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, *Jumanji*, *Ben's Dream*, and *The Polar Express*. We chose to do four books with increased mini-lessons per book opposed to multiple books with only one lesson per book because it would allow the students to focus more on the strategies and objectives we wanted to teach. Students will be encouraged to read and record their reactions, thoughts, and feelings to books by Chris Van Allsburg which will be displayed in the classroom library. This will allow them to make further connections to the author's style and themes. All four books include an increasing amount of text, less familiar but varied topics, challenging vocabulary, more complex sentences and more description which is appropriate for readers at the fourth grade reading level. According to Rog and Burton, books at this level "...begin to take on the characteristics of a "real story," with occasional use of literary language. The story line continues to be predictable, but begins to

demonstrate more sophistication such as a surprise twist at the end. The books are longer. There are many compound sentences... Several characters may take part in the dialogue. There may be four or five lines of text in each page, consisting of predominantly high-frequency words. More new vocabulary is also introduced at this level.” We felt that level nine would be appropriate for our author study due to Allsburg’s use of predictable yet sophisticated story lines with surprise endings. There are multiple characters in his stories with great use of dialogue and new vocabulary.

All the books chosen contain the same “book language” and address the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards to be met at the fourth grade level. We all loved Van Allsburg’s books growing up and agreed that fourth grade could give us more opportunities to develop in depth activities. The standards addressed by the books chosen include: *Reading Strategies, Vocabulary and Concept Development, Concepts About Print, Inquiry and Research, Comprehension Skills and Response to Text*. The first book *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* mini-lesson meets the fourth grade *Reading Strategies* standard of organizing information through sequencing of setting from the beginning to the end of the story. The second mini-lesson addresses *Comprehension Skills* through problem solving by identifying elements of a story. The last mini-lesson for this book is a questioning web which can be used as a writing prompt as well. It addresses *Comprehension Skills and Response to Text*, in addition to writing standards that concentrate on purpose. In the first mini-lesson for *Jumanji*, *Concepts About Print* are addressed by identifying and locating features that support text meaning through illustrations. The second mini lesson addresses *Comprehension Skills and Response to Text* through the literary device, characterization. The third mini-lesson for *Jumanji*, probable passage, addresses *Vocabulary and Concept Development* through inferring specific word meanings in the context of reading passages. The first mini-lesson for *Ben’s Dream*, will be a predicting activity, “I wonder/I think” worksheet, during the picture walk. This addresses *Reading Strategies*; before reading. The second mini-lesson for this book addresses the literary device; mood in *Comprehension Skills and Response to Text*. The third mini-lesson is a web research

activity of the ten landmarks visited in the story. This addresses the standard *Inquiry and Research* by having students locate information on the internet. The mini-lesson for *The Polar Express* addresses *Comprehension Skills and Response to Text* by identifying and summarizing central ideas from the book. All books begin with a picture walk followed by a read aloud which addresses the above standards to introduce the text and make connections to the author's style and theme. This will be part of every mini lesson.

We chose to introduce our author through a treasure hunt activity. Kids love hunting for treasure! It is an interactive and creative way to introduce a group of students to elements they will be exploring during an author study in the classroom. Furthermore, this activity also serves as a great way to develop dynamic team-building skills within the classroom.

The students will be placed into four groups to participate in the treasure hunt. Each group will have a "treasure chest" which they will use to collect their hidden treasures. The teacher will provide the groups with a shoe box, which will serve as their chest. In order to make it look more like a treasure chest, the students will be given time to decorate it with materials such as: construction paper, stickers, markers and glue.

After the students have adequate time to create their chest, the art materials will be collected and all eyes must be on the teacher! The four groups will each receive a treasure map, which has a bird's eye view of the area in which the treasure hunt will take place. The groups will only be given one copy- so all students must work together and make sure not to lose their only link to participation in this exciting adventure!

There will be four items hidden in various places around the room (or area in which the treasure hunts will take place). Each item is representative of a book that was written by the author they will study. The items they will find include: a picture of the dog Fritz (*The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*), a game board (*Jumanji*), a map of the world (*Ben's Dream*), and a bell (*The Polar Express*). Furthermore, at each treasure location, along with the item, the students will have to take two pieces of paper. One will provide them with the clue to find the next treasure location. Each group will have a clue with their group's number on it to lead them to their next

location, since their maps are going to be different from the other groups. The other paper will provide an interesting fact about the author in question.

****The teacher will have a copy of the map with the four locations of treasures clearly marked. In addition, several key hints will be written on the teacher's map, such as 10 footsteps this way, or 5 footsteps this way, etc, to aide the students if they get stuck trying to find the next location.****

After all groups have found their treasures and facts about the mystery author, they will come back to their seats and wait for the next set of directions. It is important for the teacher to let the students know that the four items found after the hunt are representative of the books they will be reading by Van Allsburg (who has not been revealed yet). After all students are seated, the teacher will explain that the next part of the activity is for the students to meet with their group and discuss the treasure items and facts about the author. They must brainstorm some ideas of who the author could be. Students will be given a couple of minutes to try to solve the mystery. Each group will have to present their findings to the class and explain who they think the author is and why?

After each group presents, the teacher will read the book, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, that some of the students may be familiar with. At the end of the story, the students will have an opportunity to individually answer who the author is, if they think they know. Teacher will reveal the name of the author at this time: Chris Van Allsburg. Some of the students may recognize the author and know some of his works. To activate prior knowledge, if possible, students will be asked to share their thoughts about any of Van Allsburg's book they may have read. The students will then be given the instructions for the final aspect of the activity: researching biographical information about Van Allsburg. The students will remain in the four groups they were assigned for the treasure hunt. Each group will be given a large piece of poster board in the shape of a puzzle piece (all four puzzle pieces will be made to fit together). The teacher will assign each group a research topic. The four

topics are: Van Allsburg's childhood/family life, Van Allsburg's literary works, Interesting facts about Van Allsburg and/or his books, and the awards that Van Allsburg has received during his lifetime.

The students will begin by using Van Allsburg's website. After exploring his website, they may use any search engine to find their assigned research topic. During the search, the teacher will walk around and make sure they students are on task and only looking up information about Van Allsburg. After the students have printed out their information, they will paste it onto their respective puzzle piece. When all four groups are done, they will fit the poster board pieces together and hang the completed puzzle in the front of the room (with help from the teacher... see attachment for a sample of a puzzle piece which includes biographical information about Chris Van Allsburg). The teacher will explain that all of these parts are important to really learn about the author of the books they will be reading: all of these aspects fit together to make Van Allsburg. The student groups will have a chance to read the information on their puzzle piece to the class to further introduce the focus of the author study to their fellow peers.

Block 2:

Questioning Web
The Garden of Abdul Gasazi

Book Summary: When young Alan Mitz is asked to take care of Miss Hester's unruly dog Fritz while she visits Cousin Eunice, he has no idea what adventures are in store for him. Fritz keeps Alan busy all morning by attempting to chew up Miss Hester's furniture. Later, Alan dutifully takes Fritz for his afternoon walk. Fritz breaks free and runs through the door to Gasazi's garden. Alan follows Fritz's paw prints deep into the garden. Believing that the magician has captured Fritz, Alan bravely knocks on the door and is welcomed into Gasazi's home by the great man himself. After apologizing, Alan asks for Fritz. Expressing his dislike of dogs, the magician tells poor Alan that he has turned Fritz into one of the ducks. As Alan tearfully takes the duck that is Fritz and heads for home, a gust of wind blows his hat off of his head. The duck swoops out of Alan's arms, catches the hat, and flies away into the distance. Alan walks back to Miss Hester's house only to learn from her that Fritz was waiting in the front yard when she returned from Cousin Eunice's house. She tells Alan that the magician has simply played a trick on him. Relieved, Alan says goodbye and heads for home. After he leaves, Fritz trots up to Miss Hester with Alan's lost hat in his mouth! Was Gasazi playing a joke, or was Fritz really temporarily turned into a duck?

Rational: The book supports the comprehension strategy learned by having the students use information from the book to fill in the web.

Objective: The students will be able to complete a questioning web using the book *Jumanji* and using their own thoughts.

Procedure: The teacher will begin modeling this strategy by saying, “Sometimes when I read a book I ask myself questions about who, what, where, and why? When you question a story it helps guide thinking and develop critical thinking skills.” Then I will pull up on the over head projector a questioning web and model how to complete it (see attached copy). “This is a questioning web and I am going to write down a question I wondered about after reading *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*.” As the teacher says this she will fill in the title and author at the top of the page. “I wondered was Fritz really turned into a duck?” This will be written on the board in the “I wonder” circle. Then the teacher will fill in clues to why she thought that. “Some of the following clues that made me think this were: the magician said he turns dogs into ducks for trespassing, Fritz went missing, a duck flew over Allen with his hat in his mouth, and the dog returned home with the hat in his mouth.”

Application: Students will use a question they had when they read the story and use it to fill in the questioning web.

Effectiveness of Lesson: The students will have completed the questioning web with supporting information from the story.

Story Map “Recipe”
The Garden of Abdul Gasazi

Book Summary: See initial mini lesson for this story

Rationale: Recognizing the basic literary elements of a story is a key concept in analyzing a story. Story maps are templates that provide students with a concrete framework for identifying the elements of narrative stories. To facilitate comprehension, students need to know about the general structure of stories. It allows them to become more involved in the story and take a greater interest in details. “The Garden of Abdul Gasazi” is an excellent story to teach the concept of story mapping because each character in this story has a unique personality, and each scene is rendered to portray a specific mood—the eeriness of Gasazi's garden, the gloominess of the magician's sitting room- all of which contribute to the plot.

Objective: By the end of this lesson, students will use their prior knowledge of literary elements to complete a story map that frameworks “The Garden of Abdul Gasazi.”

Review: Before beginning the procedure, the teacher will review with students the basic elements of a story: setting, characters, problems, and resolutions. This will be done orally. The teacher will ask “Can anyone tell me what the setting of a story is?” Students will raise their hands to respond. The same question will be asked about characters and plot (problems/resolutions). Each response will be written on the front board for students to refer to during the mini lesson. Activating this prior knowledge will prepare students for the following procedure.

Procedure: Introduce the concept of story mapping by explaining that story maps help a reader think about the significant features of a text. Say, “A story map is a graphic organizer that a reader can use to identify important details and explore ideas within a story.” The teacher will model this by mapping “The Garden of Abdul Gasazi” with the class. Begin modeling by putting the “Story Mapping Recipe” transparency on the overhead projector. Say: “Stories are much like recipes. When baking a cake, if you leave out the eggs, the cake stays flat. If an element is left out of a story, it falls flat as well.” Explain to students that this is the basic format of a story map.

In “The Garden of Abdul Gasazi,” there are multiple settings and characters. Tell students: “Begin by choosing a character, and follow him throughout the story. Identify his journey through setting, his problems, and resolutions.” Have students choose a character to begin with. Write this character on the story map transparency. Say: “We know setting consists of where and when the story takes place, but paying attention to details can give you more clues to the rest of the story and provide a better description.” The teacher will refer to the book to identify passages, phrases, and illustrations which tells students more about the setting and other elements. Add these descriptions to the transparency.

Application: Now hand out a copy of the “Story Map Recipe” worksheet. Have students work together to repeat this process in groups or four. The resolution in this story (and in all of Chris Van Allsburg’s stories) is not clear. It leaves the reader with a question to be answered. Be sure to draw attention to this so students remember it as part of Van Allsburg’s style/theme of writing as they continue to read more of his literature. Groups will be instructed to share their findings after sufficient time is given to complete the remainder of the story map. Retellings strengthen understanding and offer opportunities for oral expression.

Effectiveness of Lesson: Students will have achieved the objectives of this mini lesson through correctly identifying the literary elements of a story during the oral review, by identifying characters and following them throughout the story to sort out his/her journey (through setting, problems, and resolutions-or lack there of), by referring to “The Garden of Abdul Gasazi” to identify passages, phrases, and illustrations that tell them more about the setting and other elements, and by working productively together in groups of four to complete the story map correctly and thoroughly. They will also share their findings with the class which gives them opportunities for oral expressions and to strengthen understanding.

Inferring: Mood *Jumanji*

Book Summary: Peter and his sister Judy find an ordinary-looking board game under a tree in the park. They take it home and try it out, even though they think it will be just another boring board game. As they play, they encounter a hair-raising adventure as the game “comes to life” and they find that they are playing to save their own lives.

Rationale: Mood is somewhat subjective and hard to explain. Inferences are a combination of what the text “tells” us and what we bring to the text through our prior experiences and background. *Jumanji* uses a lot of dialogue and detailed black and white illustrations. The strategy of this mini lesson will guide students towards a greater understanding of the ways in which text and character dialogue, in conjunction with illustrations, can affect the tone and mood of a story. This story is a perfect example from Van Allsburg’s collection to demonstrate mood.

Objective: Students will be able to identify mood by making inferences through story writing and from rereading dialogue and text in the story, in conjunction with the illustrations in *Jumanji*.

Procedure: The teacher will begin modeling this strategy by explaining: “Sometimes we have to make inferences because the author doesn’t say everything we need in order to understand the text, so we have to figure it out ourselves! We do this when we want to understand important ideas.” The teacher will then put the following on the overhead projector (copy attached):

1. I think about what the author says about the topic, or what the illustrations show.
2. I think about what I already know about the topic.
3. Then I tie them together to figure out what I need to know.

This will remain on the projector for the majority of the mini lesson for student's reference.

The teacher will continue by saying: "Mood is an emotional condition created by the author within the setting. It refers to the feeling which the reader is supposed to get from the text. Because mood is a feeling created, it cannot be directly stated. It is something we, as readers, have to infer from the text and illustrations. Today, we're going to apply this strategy of inferring mood to writing stories. First, you need to think about what the author tells you about the characters and setting and also look at illustrations." Teacher will open to page 4 and read. "From this passage, I know that one of the main characters is Judy. I also know that the setting takes place at the park and in their home." The teacher will write this under the first bullet as an example.

"Now I need to think about what I know about this topic. I know that sometimes when I'm bored I like to try new and interesting things." The teacher will write this under the second bullet.

"The author is implying something about what kind of person Judy is. I have to figure out what is the author wants us to know about Judy because he doesn't give us all the details. I must also look at what the illustration is showing me and combine the clues I find with what I already know. For example, Judy says "Race you home!" This tells me that Judy is competitive. I know this because of what the text says and because I have challenged my friends to races before."

The teacher will continue to model by explaining: "As you write your story, you need to think about what the author says about the characters and the setting. You also need to think about what you see in the illustrations and what you already know from your own experiences. Using these clues, you can write a story about one of the characters and another adventure they may have.

Application: Working individually, students will begin by completing the three steps of inferring mood in their journals, showing multiple examples of clues and providing supporting evidence. They will then use this

information to create their own stories about one of the main characters in *Jumanji*, and another adventure the character might get into, using what they have learned about mood.

Effectiveness of Lesson: This mini lesson will be successful if students are able to write a story that requires comprehending what the author has implied but has not directly stated, describe the thinking they used to do such inferring, and apply this in their own writing as evidence.

Characterization Map *Jumanji*

Book Summary: See initial mini lesson for this story.

Purpose/Rationale: Because characterization is such an important element of short fiction, the students will review basic character and characterization concepts before they put their knowledge to use in the completion of a characterization Map of a character of their choice from *Jumanji*. In every short story the characters have special things, or reasons, that make them an important character. Van Allsburg always uses richly developed characters in his books, but at times leaves out basic information, such as the characters name. Authors do this for many reasons, but in Van Allsburg's stories it does not seem to matter. He still provides rich insight into his characters and it is important for students to learn how to pull out that information from a book.

Objective: Students will be able to identify characterization and its importance to a story using the characters from *Jumanji*.

Procedure: The teacher will provide the students with a formal definition of characterization: "The process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character is called **characterization**." Teacher will tell students that "Characters do not need to be human, but they should possess human traits." An overhead will be used to introduce the elements of characterization to the class.

The over head will have the following information- A writer can reveal a character in the following ways: (1) By telling us directly what the character is like: respectful, determined, motivated/unmotivated, impulsive (reckless), easily influenced, and so on; (2) By describing how the character looks; (3) By revealing the character's private thoughts and feelings; (4) By revealing the character's effect on other people-showing

how other characters feel or behave toward the character; (5) By showing the character's actions (see attached for the sample overhead format).

The teacher will model the procedure for students before they complete the map on a character from *Jumanji* using an overhead version of the Characterization Map the students will be using. Because they just finished the first book of the author study, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, the teacher will complete a characterization map on the main protagonist from the story, Alan. The overhead will contain the following information about Alan:

(1) The attributes of the character:

- Alan is responsible and trustworthy- Miss Hester trusted Alan to watch Fritz while she was gone.
- He is also brave-He went into Abdul Gasazi's garden to find Fritz.
- Honest in his intention of telling Ms. Hester what happened to Fritz.

(2) What the character looks like:

- Alan is tall and skinny.
- He has dark hair and wears glasses.
- He looks a lot like Harry Potter.

(3) The character's private thoughts and feelings:

- He feels apprehensive to enter into Gasazi's garden.
- Alan believes Gasazi when he tells him he turned Fritz into a duck.
- Alan feels foolish for being tricked by Abdul Gasazi.

(4) The character's effect on other people/how other characters react to this character:

- Ms. Hester felt that Alan was a responsible young man, and trusted him with the care of her dog while she was gone.
- Abdul Gasazi thought that Alan was

(5) The character's actions:

- Alan acts responsibly when he agrees to look after Fritz for Ms. Hester.
- Alan takes Fritz for a walk and is worried when he gets loose.
- Alan bravely enters into Gasazi's garden to search for the dog.
- He is honest when he approaches Gasazi and also when he is returning home with the intentions of explaining what happened to Fritz.
- He is confused and mad at himself for believing what the man told him.

Application: The teacher will allow students the opportunity to ask questions about anything that might have confused them about the completion of the characterization map. Once the teacher feels the students have a

good understanding of the elements of characterization and are able to apply it to text based on the example the teacher gave, the students will be given a characterization worksheet. The worksheet will have a scroll in the middle of it for the students to write the name of the character from *Jumanji* they are going to map. Branching off of the scroll will be the five elements of characterization that were on the overhead: Character's feelings; Attributes of the character-i.e. responsible; what the character looks like; how the character acts; and how other characters react to this character.

Students will complete this worksheet on their own using their *Jumanji* book as a reference. Once they have completed the assignment, they will be allowed to take out another book to read until all students are done. Once all students are done, the students will be able to share their ideas while the teacher writes them on the overhead. This way students can add ideas they may not have thought of, and use this worksheet as a reference with future Van Allsburg books.

Effectiveness: Students will be able to use what they learned about the elements of characterization through the mini lesson to complete a characterization map on *Jumanji*. They will also be able to use this template when they read additional books by Van Allsburg in order to find excerpts that illustrate characterization. If the students are able to identify passages that illustrate the elements of characterization and articulate the types of characters Van Allsburg uses in *Jumanji*, the lesson was effective.

Prequel/Sequel Writing Activity

Jumanji

Book Summary: See initial mini lesson for this story.

Purpose/Rationale: Many times authors leave the ending to their story open allowing for readers to use their own imagination about what happened. *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi, Jumanji, and The Polar Express* are all good examples of how VanAllsburg incorporates this type of style into much of his writing. *Jumangi*, in particular leaves readers wondering about what happens before and after the story. How did the game get under the tree in the first place? And, what happens to Danny and Walter Budwig after they find the game? It is important for students to be able to look beyond a story and use their imagination to answer the questions, how did the characters and the storyline get there in the first place, and what happens next?

Objective: Students will be able to use the Creative Problem Solving Technique to develop an organized and well-written prequel or sequel to *Jumangi*.

Procedure: Many students are familiar with books that have sequels. However, it is not realistic to read a book and its sequel in a mini-lesson. Therefore, in the interest of time, the teacher will model a technique that the students can use to help them put their thoughts into words, and those words into a well-written prequel or sequel to *Jumangi*. The Creative Problem Solving Technique is a great way to get students thinking about how to solve the questions that correlate to whether they are writing a prequel or a sequel to the story.

If the students decide to write a prequel, they will be answering the question- how the game got under the tree in the first place? If they chose to extend the story and write a sequel, the students will be answering

the question-what happened after Danny and Walter Budwig find the game? The teacher will prep the students by telling them they must keep these questions in mind as they are completing the worksheet.

The teacher will begin by providing students with the foundations of the Creative Problem Solving Technique. An overhead will be used that details each section of the technique: Fact Finding, Problem Finding, Idea Finding, Solution Finding, and Acceptance Finding (see attached for overhead). The teacher will then model the Problem Solving Technique on an overhead, which is exactly the same as the worksheet the students will have (see attached for worksheet template). Students may choose to write a prequel or sequel; however, the teacher will only be modeling a sample sequel. The overhead will be filled out with the following ideas generated by the teacher:

Title: *Jumanji*

Author: Chris VanAllsburg

Fact Finding:

- Danny and Walter Budwig find the Jumanji game underneath the tree.
- The boys pick up the game and walk away with it.

Problem Finding:

- In what way might the game affect Danny and Walter?

Idea Finding:

- It could have no affect: halfway home, they think the game is going to be boring and they put it back under the tree.
- It could have the same affect that it had on Peter and Judy: the boys bring the game home and as they begin to play, the game turns into a hair- raising adventure where they are playing for their lives!
- It could have a different affect on Danny and Walter: they have little imagination, and the game does not come to life for them. The game is an ordinary board game for the boys.

Solution Finding:

1. It could have a different affect on Danny and Walter: they have little imagination, and the game does not come to life for them. The game is an ordinary board game for the boys.
2. The game could the same affect that it had on Peter and Judy: the boys bring the game home and as they begin to play, the game turns into a hair-raising adventure and they find themselves playing for their lives.
3. It could have no affect: halfway home, they think the game is going to be boring and they put it back under the tree.

Acceptance Finding:

As they were rounding the corner to head home, Danny and Walter found an unusual looking box under one of the trees in the park. Curious, the boys walked over and picked it up. Danny read the top of the box: *Jumanji*. “It is a board game, Walter!” “I wonder how it got there,” Walter replied. “Who cares,” said Danny, “Let’s take it home and try it out!” Walter, hesitant, but bubbling with excitement replied, “Ok, let’s go!” Danny and Walter walked the whole way home in silence; each wondering what the game was about.

It seemed like it took an eternity to get home. By the time they made it to the front door, they were practically tearing the top of the box off. They ran into the living room and set the game up. “Wow! This board looks magical!” exclaimed Danny. “Yea, Yea. Who cares what it looks like, lets start playing,” muttered Walter. Danny and Walter were playing for about twenty minutes when Walter began to lose interest in the game: “I am not playing anymore! This game is stupid!” “Come on Walter, I like it. I want to keep playing,” pleaded Danny. Just as Walter was getting up, Danny caught what he thought was something moving on the board game out of the corner of his eye. “Wait, Walter! I think the game just moved!”.....

The teacher will not write an entire sequel. The sample starter sequel is enough to effectively demonstrate what is expected of the students. The teacher will make sure to stress that the students are not to take her idea for the story. They must come up with an idea of their own.

Application: The teacher will allow students the opportunity to ask questions about anything that might have confused them about the Creative Problem Solving Technique. After answering any questions, the teacher will give out a copy of the Creative Problem Solving worksheet to each student. This is an individual activity. The students are not permitted to work with a partner; they must channel their own creative ideas into their own unique story. One of the hidden objectives of this activity is to explore the depths of the student’s imaginations and see how many different ways the story can be extended (whether it is telling how the game got under the tree or what happened to Danny and Walter after they found the game). The teacher provided them with the

way in which to solve the problem and a sample starter sequel story. The problem the students must solve is answering the question corresponding to whether the student is writing a prequel or sequel.

The students may use their *Jumanji* book to help generate ideas for the Creative Problem Solving worksheet. After they complete the worksheet, the teacher will hand out lined paper for the students to write their prequel or sequel story to *Jumanji*. The story must be at least three pages, but it can be more. They may also choose to give their story a new title and add illustrations to enhance their work; however, it is not a requirement. The teacher will walk around and help the students as needed. Dictionaries will be provided if they need to know how to spell a word. After the students are done writing their stories, they will be able to share them with the class if they decide they want to. Additional time will be allotted for students who need it.

Effectiveness: If students are able to answer either of the following questions: how did the game get under the tree? And what happened to Danny and Walter Budwig after they find the game, in a well thought out and well-written format, the lesson was effective.

Questioning: “I wonder/I think”
Ben’s Dream

Book Summary: Ben, after learning that his mother has gone shopping, settles into a chair with his geography book just as it begins to rain. The rain hitting the windowpanes makes Ben very sleepy. With a jolt he "awakes" to find that his whole house is floating on a great sea. The house floats by the Statue of Liberty and Big Ben, both nearly submerged. The house floats under the Eiffel Tower's arch, past the Leaning Tower of Pisa, past the crumbling columns of the Parthenon, and in front of the Sphinx where he sees another floating house with a small figure looking out the window. He floats past the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China. As he floats past Mount Rushmore, George Washington opens his stone mouth to say, "Ben, wake up." Ben opens his eyes to find that the storm has passed and that Margaret is at the window, ready to play baseball. As the two friends ride their bikes toward the park, Margaret tells Ben that she fell asleep doing geography, too, and had the strangest dream. She tells him how her house floated all around the world, past landmarks half submerged in seawater. "Guess who I saw when I floated past the Sphinx," she says to Ben. When he guesses correctly, her jaw drops!

Rationale: The “I wonder/I think” questioning and inferring activity is a comprehension strategy that helps students evaluate the story critically and make personal connections. Students who answer their own questions show improvement in reading comprehension. When students question the text prior to reading, they read with an awareness of the text's important ideas. *Ben’s Dream* is an excellent story to teach this skill because it provides another example of Van Allsburg's extraordinary ability to navigate between waking and sleeping worlds; between reality and fantasy. It will be fun for children to try to recognize the various landmarks as Ben and his house float by, question the illustrations and what will happen next.

Objective: Students will be able to use the graphic organizer, “I wonder/I think” questioning and inferring activity effectively to collect information and answers questions they may have as they read through the story. Asking questions guides students thinking while they are reading.

Procedure: The teacher will begin modeling this strategy by explaining: “Sometimes the author doesn’t tell me everything I need to know or the author is unclear about the topic. When the author doesn’t tell me everything I think I need to know, I feel curious. What I need to know or what I am curious about might be different from what other people who are reading the same passage may need to know. When this happens, I ask questions because I **wonder** about something the author has written, or I ask questions because I am confused about something the author has written.”

Students will then be given the “I wonder/I think” questioning and inferring activity worksheet (sample of the worksheet is attached). The teacher will continue modeling by using the picture on the front cover of *Ben’s Dream*. The teacher will replicate the worksheet by putting “I wonder…” and “I think…” columns on the front board. The teacher will then say: “This picture makes me wonder… Was there was a flood?” Next the teacher will write the question in the “I wonder” column and say: “I want to know if there was a flood because I am confused why there is a house floating past Mt. Rushmore.” Then the teacher will say: “I think… it is Ben’s house.” The teacher will write this down in the “I think” column and say: “I think this because of what I see in the illustration and because of the book’s title.”

Application: Students will complete the “I wonder…” column during the picture walk which will allow them to make inferences about what is happening in the story. Students will think of five or more questions they may have about *Ben’s Dream*. After the picture walk, students will be selected to come to the board and write some of their questions. Next students will fill out the “I think…” column while the teacher reads the book in order to

identify their thought process. This book has limited text and is predominantly filled with illustrations, so this activity will provide students with the chance to actively use their imaginations. Students will discuss their questions and inferences to highlight thought processes.

Effectiveness of Lesson: If students are able to pose a variety of adequate questions/inferences and identify their thought process on the “I wonder/I think” worksheet, in addition to actively participating in the classroom discussion through open class dialogue, this activity will be successful. The worksheet will have been used to identify and recall illustrations, passages, and dialogue in the story for supporting evidence and to aid in their comprehension of the story. They will share their findings with the class, giving them opportunities for oral expression to strengthen understanding.

Setting Change ***Ben's Dream***

Book Summary: See initial mini lesson for this story.

Rationale: Settings are important in every book because they play an important role in the success of stories; however, they are typically an even more important quality in fiction than in other genres. “Because setting and plot often support each other, understanding time and place in a story contributes to appreciation of the events” (Kasten 183). Authors create a vivid setting in many different ways, and usually they help to set the reader’s mood. Van Allsburg most often chooses magical settings for his adventurous stories which are enhanced by his beautiful illustrations. *Ben's Dream* is the perfect book to use in examining setting change and its importance to a story. In the book, Van Allsburg transports his readers to an alternate dream-world in which most of the story is told through pictures. It is important for students to be able to connect to the setting while simultaneously understanding its importance, even if the author does not provide them with a rich description.

Objective: Students will be able to identify setting change and its importance to a story.

Procedure: The teacher will use the illustrations from a story they read earlier in the author study, *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, to model the setting change concept. The teacher will have the book to use while teaching the mini lesson; however, only the pictures will be used. Therefore, for the purposes of this lesson, all of the text will be covered in the book. As a start to the lesson, the teacher will put the definition of setting on the chalkboard: “Setting is the time and place of a story that can often symbolize the emotional state of the characters. A piece of writing will generally have many settings and each setting will generally carry with it a mood or atmosphere. The setting can be specific or vague (unclear)” (Literary Terms for English). The teacher

will continue by saying, “It is usually not enough to simply identify the time or place. An analysis of setting should include a discussion of its overall impact on the story and its’ characters.”

After the background knowledge on the importance of setting is established, the teacher will conduct a picture walk with the story. As the teacher is showing the pictures, she will talk about how the setting is important to *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*: When Alan takes Fritz for a walk, it is essential to the plot of the story for the setting to be by Abdul Gasazi’s garden-the dog gets loose and runs into Gasazi’s garden. Another example is when Alan is walking home with the duck that he thinks is Fritz. As he is walking home, a gust of wind takes his hat and the duck swoops out of his arms, into the hat, and fly’s away. At this time the teacher will inform students that weather is part of the environment, which is a part of the setting of a story. Without the strong gust of wind, the duck would have never flown away in the hat.

After the picture walk and discussion by the teacher about the setting of *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, and its importance to the story, she will put the Setting graphic organizer on the overhead to model for the students. The overhead will have four blocks, labeled: (1) Beginning setting; (2) Where do we go next?; (3) Then where do we go?; (4) Ending setting. (See attached for template) The teacher will draw a quick sketch of the setting in the beginning of the story. Then, she will move to the second important setting: The entrance to the Garden-where he lost Fritz. Next, she will draw the third important setting change, where the duck blows away on the walk home. Finally, the ending setting will be back at the house. As she is drawing each setting, the teacher will remind the students why the changes in setting are important to the plot of VanAllsburg’s story.

Application: The students will use their *Ben’s Dream* book to complete the Setting Change graphic organizer worksheet that corresponds to the story. The teacher will prompt them before they start the activity that there are more setting changes within the story than there are blocks on the worksheet. They are to indicate the beginning and ending setting specifically. Then, the remaining four blocks are open for them to pick the four

destinations they find more interesting, or most influential to the story. The teacher will have the students keep the following questions in mind as they are completing the graphic organizer: What does this setting have to do with the story? Is it important for the plot and/or the characters? Why? These questions should serve as the basis of why they choose specific settings for the graphic organizer over others.

After the students complete the worksheet on their own, they will get into pairs and compare their work. Following the discussion, the student pairs will work together to brainstorm why the setting of Ben Dream is so important to the story, and what they think VanAllsburg was trying to achieve in the way he depicted the story (using the book and their completed worksheets). They may use these questions as a spring board to foster their thinking. They will be written on the board.

- ⇒ Why does the setting change so much?
- ⇒ If the setting stayed the same, would the concept of the story change? Would it be less effective?
- ⇒ Which events in the text are most connected to the setting?
- ⇒ Did the setting affect what the characters did or didn't do?
- ⇒ If you could talk to the author about the setting of this book, what would you ask?
- ⇒ If you were writing a story, would you choose the setting first or think about characters and the conflicts they would face and let that dictate the choice of setting?

After the pairs have completed their response, they will share their ideas with the class.

Effectiveness: If the students can complete the Setting Change graphic organizer and indicate why the different settings in Ben's Dream are important to the story's plot and characters, then the lesson was effective.

Synthesizing: Landmark Research *Ben's Dream*

Book Summary: See initial mini lesson for this story

Rationale: “Ben’s Dream” is the perfect book to help student’s skills of locating countries around the world, improving research skills, their ability to identify different historical landmarks, and their text to world connections. The ten landmarks in the book are not named. This provides students with speculation to discover what each monument is as he/she reads, or will increase excitement if they can already recognize them.

Objective: Students will be able to identify the various monuments illustrated in “Ben’s Dream,” and locate these monuments on a world map through their research findings. They will be able to use this research to make deeper text to world and text to self connections.

Procedure: The teacher will begin modeling by explaining: “Today we will be using a strategy called “synthesizing” to write a plan of your family’s trip to one of the landmarks discussed in *Ben’s Dream*. Synthesizing is making a discovery while reading. It involves taking what the author says, what I know, and then making a general observation about what I notice. This observation leads me to the discovery I make. Synthesizing is taking the important ideas in a passage, combining it with what we know about the important facts, and retelling it in a new way.” The teacher will then write the following on the board:

- Synthesizing is creating understandings about what we read
- Synthesizing occurs while we are reading and after we have finish reading
- Synthesizing is moving beyond summaries

The teacher will continue by saying: “We synthesize because it helps us better understand what we read.” The teacher will then add to the board:

- We synthesize information when we have to create something new, find a solution to a problem in real life, or arrive at a new idea about a topic.
- We can synthesize information when we are reading one book.
- We can synthesize when we find information from different books and other sources.

The teacher will continue to discuss these key points with the class to clarify any questions that may arise.

****For this assignment, synthesis means “taking the important ideas in a passage, combining it with what we know about the important facts, and retelling it in a new way.” The new way will be the student’s description of his/her family’s journey to a particular landmark.**

After reading *Ben’s Dream*, as a class we will try to recognize all of the landmarks. If there are some that the students could not identify, the teacher will identify them to the class, but will not give out any other information. Students will then be split into ten pairs (some may be in groups of three depending on how many students are in the classroom) and given a landmark to research from “Ben’s Dream.” At the school library, students will use computers to research their particular landmark. They will be given a sheet of links they may use, but will be encouraged to use books, encyclopedias, and other internet resources as well.

Application: Students will have achieved the objectives of this mini lesson by properly identifying each landmark in “Ben’s Dream,” completing research tasks, presenting findings, and locating each landmark on a map- all of which will ultimately lead to deeper text to world and text to self connections.

Effectiveness of Lesson: If students are able to extend their text to world/text to self connections through researching and properly identifying/locating each landmark in *Ben's Dream*, in addition to working productively together in pairs to complete this activity correctly and thoroughly, this lesson will be effective. They will also share their findings with the class which gives them opportunities for oral expressions and to strengthen understanding.

Here's how we do it:

If you are reading one book:

Think about the important ideas in a passage and summarize it.

Think about what you know about these important ideas.

Can you add something the authors have not mentioned?

What are your own ideas about the information?

What observations can you make about this information?

Take the summary and your own observations and put them together into a new whole.

The new whole can be your own special retelling, a poem you write, a PowerPoint presentation that you create, a letter that you write to a friend, or, as in this case, **a description of your journey through Texas.**

If you are using more than one source:

Find the important ideas in all of them.

Combine them in one summary.

Think about what you know about these important ideas.

Can you add something the authors have not mentioned?

What are your own ideas about the information?

What **observations** can you make about this information?

Think about how you can **rearrange or reorganize** the information in a new way.

Think about these questions:

What would happen if.....

In what other ways can you....

For Step 3 we will be synthesizing information across several different website sources to write our description of our journey through Texas.

Application of Cognitive Strategy

Now let's apply this strategy to document your Texas trip for Step 3. Look at the guiding questions given in the webquest:

Where do you plan to enter Texas? This depends on your current location. From what country are you traveling?

How are you traveling—boat, wagon, horse, on foot? Or will you need a combination of transportation types?

How many rivers will you need to cross?

What do you plan to take with you and how will you transport it?

Looking at your map, what problems do you think (or fear) you will encounter?

We will **synthesize** the information we get from different websites to help us write the description of our trip through Texas. First, we must determine where we will enter Texas. Let's pretend we are German immigrants on our way to settle near New Braunfels, Texas. We will be arriving by boat from New Orleans. Where will we land? Let's look at a map and determine a coastal city that makes sense to us.

Let's try these websites:

<http://usgwarchives.org/maps/texas/misc/1887txarea.jpg>

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/images/frontier49.html>

What do these maps tell us? Think about **what you know** about New Orleans and where it is located. Find a map that shows New Orleans. The first website shows the location of New Orleans and the second shows the coastline of Texas. Now we need to take what we notice in these maps and make an **inference** about which Texas city makes sense as the place to enter Texas. Galveston looks like the best place, because it is the closest one to New Orleans.

Let's take notes to use in our description. In our notes we can write down that our point of entry is Galveston because we are traveling by boat from New Orleans.

Now that we are here, we are tired and need to rest for a while. We want to find a nearby German community so that we can communicate with them. We do not speak Spanish or English so we need to find German people who can help us buy supplies for our trip to New Braunfels. Let's look at a different map to find out where there are German communities.

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_texas/rural_pop_origins.jpg

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_texas/german_element_1850.jpg

These maps show us that there is a small German community near Galveston. We will go there first to rest and buy supplies. Let's add this information to our notes.

Keep in mind your destination and the guiding questions as you plan your trip through Texas. Use the maps and the other websites to **synthesize or bring the information together** as you describe your trip.

Dialogue through Letter Writing
The Polar Express

Book Summary: On Christmas Eve, a boy boards a train called The Polar Express that is bound for the North Pole. When the train reaches the North Pole, Santa chooses one of the children on board to receive the first gift of Christmas. He chooses the boy, who asks for a bell from the reindeer's harness. On the train trip home, the boy loses the bell. However, he gets it back wrapped in a gift under the tree. He and his sister can hear the beautiful sound the bell makes, but his parents cannot.

Rational: The book supports this strategy by providing logical sequence and details. Writing helps students develop an awareness of form, structure, and author's point of view.

Objective: The students will be able to retell The Polar Express in newspaper form, answer the five W's: who, what, where, when and why and add a headline.

Procedure: The teacher will begin the lesson by saying, "*The Polar Express* had so many memorable moments that I can't forget." Then the teacher will make a list on the board of important events that took place and encourage the students to construct the sequence of events on the board. "I am going to make a list of the events that occurred and if any can help me please raise their hand." After the list is complete the teacher will say, "Today the class will be able to retell the story, The Polar Express in their own words like I just did. However, you are going to write it in newspaper form and have to create your own headline for the paper." The teacher will provide examples of newspapers writing for the students to look at and an example of a headline that she created. "There are newspaper clippings for you to refer to if you need help. Don't forget to include the five w's: who, what, where, and why." The teacher will provide "holiday" paper for the students to print out their

final copy on and ask if there are any questions. The teacher will have a few copies of *The Polar Express* for the students to refer back to and will be walking around to provide support.

Application: The students will show they have achieved the objective by retelling the story in sequence using details from *The Polar Express*.

Effectiveness of Lesson: The students will have identified and summarized central ideas from *The Polar Express*, in newspaper form.

Using Context Clues *The Polar Express*

Book Summary: See initial mini lesson for this story.

Rationale: The book supports this strategy by providing examples where context clues can be used to make general sense of a text.

Objective: The students will be able to use context clues to find meaning of a sentence.

Procedure: The teacher will begin by writing on the board-We crossed a barren desert of ice- the Great Polar Ice Cap. The teacher will read the sentence aloud and then ask, “If I were reading this sentence in *The Polar Express* and I did not know what the word barren meant, I could look it up in a dictionary or I could use context clues to figure it out. However, I’m reading the book in a comfy place and I don’t want to get up to get a dictionary. So, I am going to use context clues instead. I’m going to start by asking myself the following questions: What do the words around the unknown word mean? How could the unknown word relate to those words? Does the layout (design) of the text give me a clue? Does the publication or type of book give any clues to what the text might be about?” The teacher will answer these questions and pull up a transparency of the paragraph the sentence was in to confer what the word barren means (see attachment). “Now it is your turn to show me how to use context clues. I have a paragraph from the story that I want you to read and find context clues for the word lurch.” The students will then read independently a paragraph from the *Polar Express* and provide context clues to support the meaning of the word lurch. This will be provided on a transparency for their viewing (see attachment).

Application: The students will read a page from *The Polar Express* on the overhead projector and explain what the word means by providing the context clues that led them to their answer.

Effectiveness: The students will have asked themselves questions about the word lurch to find context clues to support the word's meaning.

Block 3:

Teaching Author Styles and Themes

Many of Chris Van Allsburg's books have won awards. *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*, *Ben's Dream*, *The Polar Express*, *Jumanji*, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, and *The Stranger*, have all won the prestigious Caldecott award. Van Allsburg has many other numerous awards for not just his writing, but also his illustrations.

Students will create their own awards for outstanding literature. Awards will be based on Chris Van Allsburg's books. A wide variety of Van Allsburg's books will be available for students in the classroom library. They will be given an award template (see attached) on which they will fill in the title of their award, the qualities and characteristics deserving of their award, in addition to creating their own seal and providing their signature in the spaces provided. This activity will be used to introduce and explain the process of creating a style statement. Students will consider elements of style such as sentence and paragraph structure, vocabulary, dialogue, point of view, characters, sequencing, figures of speech, and tone among all of his stories. After individual work, students will collaborate in groups to identify common themes and styles. Groups will present their findings on chart paper to the class, and the teacher will write the most dominant themes on the board. Next the teacher will explain that a style statement is a short, one sentence description of the author's style and theme of writing which can include a mixture of literary elements. Students will individually create their own style statement using information from the activity.

Through creating this Author Study, we have found the most dominant characteristics that are unique to Van Allsburg's works include:

- A psychological, emotional, or moral premise
 - Faith

- Perseverance
- Honesty and truth
- Decision-making
- Thought provoking
 - What if? / What then? scenarios
- Illusion/magic
- Dreams vs. reality
- Mystery
- Definitive plot
- Fritz, the Bull Terrier who appears in every book in some form
- Whimsical illustrations
- Illustrations are representational of everyday, ordinary things with underlying mystery
 - Puzzling qualities

Sample Style Statement: Chris Van Allsburg uses elements of magic and mystery that leaves the reader with a question to be answered, while also including a moral or emotional foundation.

Block 4:

Culminating Activity

In Chris Van Alls Burg's first book, "The Garden of Abdul Gasazi," a boy chases a dog named Fritz through a topiary garden. Chris Van Allsburg has included Fritz in all his books thereafter. To conclude this unit we are going to have the students look for Fritz in each book. Students will create a class book, similar to "Where's Waldo?" where each student submits an illustration where they have hidden Fritz.

Fritz was actually Chris Van Allsburg's brother-in-law's dog, named Winston. Winston was the model for Fritz in the book, "*The Garden of Abdul Gasazi*". Van Allsburg considered Winston as his nephew. Unfortunately, the bull terrier died in an accident at a young age. As a commemorative, Van Allsburg has included him in a small part in all of his books.

Students will be encouraged to work independently so that they can create an illustration based off of their own liking from one of Van Allsburg's books. However, it is possible that student may choose the same scene from the same book. This is acceptable considering drawings are created by each student's individual design and imagination. After the book is complete we will assemble and laminate it. The book will be located in our classroom library. During free time students can enjoy looking for Fritz through each others illustrations.

The "Where's Fritz?" activity, allows the students to look through all the books once again, and discover or rediscover that picture books can be as interesting and complex as novels. We hope that with exposure each time to Chris Van Allsburg's books that our students become more interested in his work and make their own connections.

Chris Van Allsburg's is one of the greatest children's book illustrators of our time. We are all looking forward to continuing our investigation into his work.