

Teacher's Notes and Copy Masters





The Secret of the Song

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The Woodlanders come to the rescue of their elderly neighbour Mrs Moss, who owns Bluff Lake's Wetlands. The Wetlands have been owned by Mrs Moss's family for generations, but now the taxes are too high for her to pay and she is faced with having to sell the land to developers. The Woodlanders help Mrs Moss take on the developers and rescue the Wetlands. Together, they unravel the secrets of a mystery quilt and an old nursery song and convince the town to save the Wetlands.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

"This book is about something that actually happened to some wetlands within our town; in fact my husband is the one who solved the problem by suggesting the builder not build on the part that would flood, but donate it for tax benefits as a nature preserve where hundreds of animals and plants live today."

Irene Schultz

Introducing the Book

- Write the title on the board. Explain that it is the title of the story the children are going to read, and also refers to a way a mother left a secret for her daughter. Ask questions such as, *How might a song contain a secret? What sort of secret might it be?*
- Display the front cover and discuss what is happening in the illustration. Invite volunteers to read the blurb and the table of contents. Ask, *Are there any clues about the secret of the song? Can you find any clues about anything else that might happen in the story?* Invite children to make initial predictions about the story.
- Provide each of the children with a copy of **Copy Master 1**, and discuss how they could use the sheet as they read the story.

Directing the Reading

- Have children read the book independently
- **OR** guide children's reading using questions and discussion points such as those set out below
- **OR** guide children through early chapters, until they are confident to read on independently.

- **Chapter 1** *What are the Wetlands? Why did the Woodlanders go to the Wetlands? Why did they want to speak to Mrs Moss?*
- **Chapters 2–3** *How did the Woodlanders react to Mrs Moss's news? What is your opinion of Mr Whip? What information in the story supports your view?*
- **Chapters 4–5** *What are the problems Mrs Moss has to overcome? How do you think the Woodlanders might be able to help her? What clues did Mrs Moss's mother leave? How do you think the song could be connected to the quilts?*
- **Chapter 6** *What is a petition? What do the Woodlanders hope to achieve with a petition about the Wetlands? What responses did they get to the petition? What different strategies did the Woodlanders use to get signatures? Whose strategy was most successful? Why? Do you think the petition will save the Wetlands?*
- **Chapters 7–8** *Do you think the council members were influenced by the visit to the Wetlands and their encounter with Mr Whip? Why? What do you think they will decide about the issue? Why? How did the Woodlanders solve the first mystery of the quilt?*
- **Chapters 9–10** *What did the fire in the Wetlands reveal? Why did Mr Whip laugh? What solution to the Wetlands problem did Dave and Mrs Tandy suggest? Has your opinion of Mr Whip changed? If so, why?*
- **Chapters 11–12** *How has Mr Whip changed his plans for the Wetlands? What is going to happen to the Wetlands now? How do the Woodlanders solve the final mystery?*
- **Chapter 13** *What was at the end of the rainbow? What are the Woodlanders, Mr Whip, Chief Hemster and Mrs Moss celebrating? Did the story end the way you thought it would?*



SKILLS

- **Verbs:**
 - examine tense (regular and irregular past-tense forms and their spellings)
- **Homophones:**
 - such as *wear/where*;
there/their; *two/to*;
by/buy; *see/sea*;
roar/raw; *meet/meat*
- **Punctuation:**
 - review use of apostrophes, commas, speech marks and full stops

BEYOND THE TEXT

- Invite children to redesign the book cover. Encourage them to write their own back cover blurbs and create their own illustrations for the front cover.
- Brainstorm other forms of civic action the Woodlanders could have used to raise awareness about the Wetlands (for example, writing to the local paper, letter-box drops and so on). Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each action. Children might wish to find out about similar campaigns in the local community.
- Ask children to research the art and history of quilt making. (They might also ask a member of a quilt-making group to talk to the class.) Encourage the children to design their own quilts.

Expanding Understanding and Reading Critically

- Ask the children to review **Copy Master 1** and compare their earlier predictions with what actually happened.
- Much of the plot involves solving the mysteries of the quilt and the nursery song Mrs Moss's mother used to sing. Children could complete **Copy Master 2**.
- Reread Chapter 7 and discuss the town council meeting. Work with the children to list the arguments for and against Mrs Moss selling her land to Mr Whip. The children could compose a letter to Mr Whip to persuade him not to buy Mrs Moss's land.
- Discuss how the author builds suspense by adding conflict. Invite children to recall the situations in the story involving conflict and list them on the board. Encourage volunteers to identify the sequence in which these events occurred, the characters involved, and how the situation was resolved.
- Children could complete the quiz on **Copy Master 3**.

Skills in Focus

Verbs





- On the board write two or three examples of simple sentences using regular past-tense verbs (-ed endings); for example, *We **worked** hard yesterday*. Briefly discuss some of the spelling patterns for changing a basic verb to the past-tense (doubling a consonant, as in *sip/sipped*; dropping "e", as in *live/lived*). Then ask children to skim page 32 to find examples of past-tense verbs ending in -ed.
- Now challenge children to identify other past-tense verbs on page 32 that do not end in -ed (*sold, made, kept, told*). Ask children to give the present-tense form of each verb. Discuss the changes in spelling for each example. Brainstorm other irregular past-tense verbs, such as *fight/fought*, *rise/rose*, *shine/shone*, *eat/ate*. List them according to spelling pattern. Children could complete **Copy Master 4**.

Punctuation

- On the board or on chart paper, copy the dialogue between Mr Whip and Mrs Moss (page 23), omitting all punctuation. Then work with the children to punctuate the text. Once complete, compare the edited text to the original text in the book. Discuss the use of apostrophes (to contract two words), commas (to separate clauses), speech marks (to indicate direct speech) and full stops (to separate sentences). Also invite children to comment on problems that a reader might have if text has not been punctuated carefully.

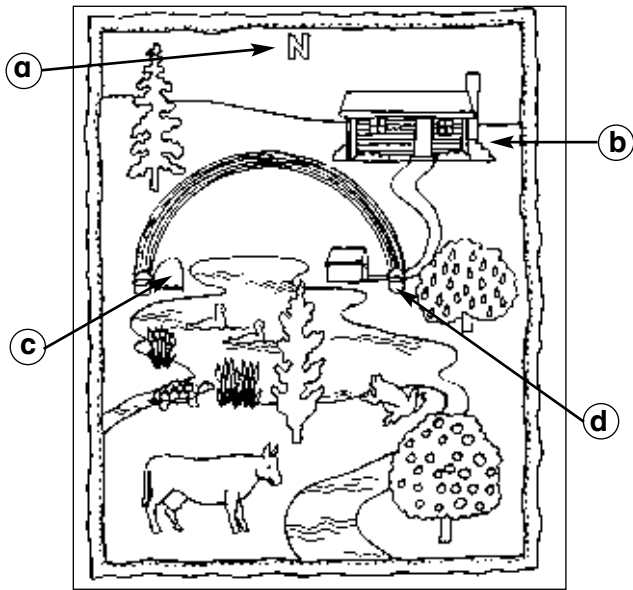
I Predict...

Name: _____

At the end of...	My predictions	My reasons								
Chapter 2 	<i>I predict</i>									
Chapter 5 	<i>I predict</i>									
Chapter 9 	<i>I predict</i>									
Chapter 12 	<i>I predict</i>									
How might the town council take care of the Wetlands in the future? _____ _____ _____ _____										
My predictions were: <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">Perfect</td> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">Very good</td> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">Not bad</td> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">Not even close!</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> </table>			Perfect	Very good	Not bad	Not even close!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perfect	Very good	Not bad	Not even close!							
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Wetlands Farm Quilt

Name: _____



*Milk and eggs the money make
 Mix them up to make a steak
 Some day Jeanie will give thanks
 Riches in the Wetlands banks
 Milk and eggs the money make
 Mix them up to make a steak.*

1. Each letter shows an important part of the quilt’s message. Explain what each part of the “puzzle” means.

- a _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____

2. What were the two secrets of the quilt?

- _____
- _____

3. What words in the song confused Mrs Moss and the Woodlanders?

4. What were the “secrets” of the song?

Try this!

Decide where you might hide treasure. Draw a map and write some clues.

Quiz

Name: _____

Read pages 44–46 of *The Secret of the Song*. Then answer these questions.

1. Who was confused about the meaning of “green-belt” and “petition”?

Mr Whip

Sammy

Mrs Moss

2. “Green-belt” refers to:

a piece of land where no houses can be built.

a piece of land that is only for gardens.

a strip of land with lots of trees that are to be cut down.

3. A petition is a:

town council report about dangerous pets.

list of signatures from people wanting to change something.

town council list of new laws.

4. Find this sentence on page 45:

Bill said, “Hey! Let’s talk to people BEFORE the meeting!”

Which word could be used instead of **said** in the sentence above?

demanded

suggested

asked

5. Imagine you are someone who signs the petition. Explain the reasons for your decision.

6. Write a different heading for the petition shown on page 46.

Looking at Language

Name: _____

1. Circle the incorrect verb in each sentence. Then write the correct verb.

- She grewed some flowers in the garden. _____
- The tree rised up into the sky. _____
- She eated the delicious piece of cake. _____
- The sun shined directly through the window. _____
- The soldiers fighted for their country. _____
- They meeted each other in the school yard. _____

2. Write these basic verbs in the **past tense**.

fall	_____	sleep	_____
wash	_____	make	_____
drink	_____	place	_____
sit	_____	fly	_____
drive	_____	purr	_____
ride	_____	laugh	_____

3. Use the following punctuation marks to correct the passage below.

. , “ ” ’ ?

There were oak trees in the dry places around the Wetlands Red
leaves still stuck to them

Janet Jasper said Its beautiful here Id no idea it was like this I see
why you kids want to keep the Wetlands

Just then a thin, mean-looking man walked up

It was Carl Whip

He said What are you doing here on my property



The Woodland Mysteries series provides **high interest, low reading level novels** that build reader confidence and develop reading proficiency.

Interest level: Years 5–6
Reading level: Years 3–4

All ten titles in the series are **mystery adventures** featuring the “Woodlanders”, a fun-loving family of five with whom children will readily identify. All texts feature:

- **Strong, engaging plots**, with plenty of action
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- **More dialogue than description**, with the speaker clearly identified at the opening of all direct speech
- **Accessible, natural vocabulary.**

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- Background notes from the author
- Discussion questions and activities to develop **comprehension and critical responses**
- Extension activities for **independent and small group work**
- Explicit **skills** instruction.

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The Diamond of Doom
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The Great Dinosaur Hunt

The Hunt for Pirate Gold
The Mystery of the Missing Dog
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The Secret of the Song
The Two Runaways

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Especially written for pupils in Years 5 and 6 who need **Additional Literacy Support (ALS)**. The *Teacher’s Notes* and *Copy Masters* directly support NLS word-level and sentence-level work at the Year 3 and 4 levels.

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