

Songming Settings

LESSON 1

CLUES



Objectives

The students will:

- Practice reading comprehension skills.
- Explore how to use textual clues to provide a setting for a story.

Materials

- “Winter in Songming” book
- “Winter in Songming” Pronunciation Guide and Glossary

Procedure

1. Read the book “Winter in Songming.”

Read the story aloud to the class. Ask students to pay special attention to the title of the book, and think about what it means as they read or listen to the story.

2. Discuss the setting of the story.

Ask the students to tell you about the setting of the book. Specifically, ask them for the answers to the following questions:

- In what part of the world does the story take place?
Show them a map and ask them to identify Asia and then China.
- Does the story take place in a city or in the countryside?
- During what time of the year does the story take place?
- During what time of the week does the story take place?

Mealtimes:

Meals in other parts of the world may be very different than meals you or your students are used to eating at home. In rural parts of China families usually eat meals only twice a day. They have a late breakfast at about 10:00 a.m. after they complete morning chores, and dinner during early evening. People eat similar food for both breakfast and dinner (rice, vegetables and some sort of protein). Families in remote rural areas do not have refrigerators, so each meal has to be freshly prepared.

Now ask the students, “How did you know this was the setting of the story?” Explain that writers use clues to give the story a particular time and place where the action occurs. Some of those clues are more obvious, and others are more subtle. Ask the students to identify words and phrases in the text of the story that provided them with clues to the setting of the story. Go through the text together to identify some of these clues. Write down some of the more subtle clues and have students explain how the word or phrase makes the

National Standards Addressed



LANGUAGE ARTS

- Read a wide range of texts to build an understanding of cultures of the world.
- Apply a wide range of strategies to evaluate and interpret information from texts and visual clues.



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Procedure (continued)

reader think of a particular time or place. Some clues from the text include:

- “Fields once bursting with corn and potatoes lie still.”
- “The pepper bushes . . . stand patiently in low rows . . .”
- “. . . a lone rice paddy lingers, waiting . . .”
- “. . . a rooster squawks . . .”
- “. . . an old mud house . . .”
- “. . . he’s home from school for the weekend . . .”
- “Zadou throws on his boots and jacket . . .”
- “He hurries inside and squats beside her on the floor . . .”
- “Outside, he fills the pot with water . . .”
- “Little Brother fills the trough . . .”
- “Children and mothers hover around campfires to stay warm.”
- “It’s snowing in Songming.”
- “. . . a few fat, fluffy flakes.”



- 3. Discuss what wintertime in Songming is like.** Explain again that an author leaves many clues in the text about the setting of the book. In “Winter in Songming,” there are many clues in the text about what life is like for Zadou.

Have students name chores that Zadou and his family members do in the story. Remind them that these are chores that need to be done on the weekend during wintertime. Some of these chores are done year-round, and some are only done during wintertime. Chores that take place only during winter include building new houses or adding new rooms to them. This type of work is only done in winter because at other times of the year people are busy planting, growing and harvesting crops (during winter the only food Zadou’s family grows is winter cabbage).

Tell students that by reading the clues about “Winter in Songming,” they probably already know a lot about other times of the year in Songming. Ask students to think about what goes on during springtime in Songming. Have them name chores that they think Zadou and his family might need to do during spring.

Springtime - To Do List

- *Harness the water buffalo to pull the plow*
- *Plow the fields*
- *Spread compost onto the fields*
(compost is used as fertilizer to help the crops grow)
- *Plant crops*
 - *Beans*
 - *Vegetables*
 - *Corn*
 - *Grass Seed*
 - *Potatoes*
- *Pick the last of the winter cabbage*
- *Plow the rice paddy and plant the rice*
- *Take care of pig bedding*
- *Feed and water the other animals*
 - *Rooster*
 - *Chickens*
 - *Pigs*
 - *Water Buffalo*

Procedure (continued)

4. Discuss clues that students can use in creating settings about their own lives.

Have students think about a particular holiday that their family celebrates or a special time of the year. Ask students to name clues that they might use to show a reader the time and place of the setting that they are imagining.

Extension Activities

Have your students make a “To Do” list of things that would appear as clues to their imagined setting. What chores need to be done for this festival or time of year? How do the chores give clues about where and when the story takes place?

If you wish, have your students write out the story inserting the setting clues that they have come up with in their “To Do” list.

Links To Heifer International

Holistic Community Development

Many of Heifer International’s projects around the world involve livestock and agriculture. Because of this, there is often a seasonality to the projects. However, Heifer International uses a holistic approach to development – this means the goals of Heifer’s projects are not single-faceted, but instead are multi-dimensional. One of the most important parts of Heifer’s holistic approach is to develop the ability of groups to take on a variety of projects to improve their communities. In Songming during the winter, when agricultural work slows down, the community is busy working together to improve the houses. The tempo and focus of the work may be different, but increasing the ability of people to work together to help themselves continues year round.

To learn more about Heifer International’s holistic approach to community development in Asia, go to www.heifer.org.



“Winter in Songming” Pronunciation Guide and Glossary

Pronunciation:

Songming	(sung-ming)
Zadou	(tzah – dough)
Qin	(chin)
Guo	(kwoh)

Definitions:

bedding	Materials (like straw or pine needles) that is put in a stable for livestock animals to sleep on.
bristles	Being full of movement and action.
churning	Stirring or turning round and round.
cistern	A large basin (or small pool) where water (usually rain water) can collect.
compost	A soil-like mixture made from materials (such as food scraps or manure) that can decompose and be used as fertilizer to help crops grow.
concrete mixer	A machine that looks like a very large bowl with fans inside it. This machine mixes gravel, water and other materials to make concrete. When it is first made, concrete is a thick liquid. After concrete is poured and sets, it hardens into a solid.
courtyard	An area that is open to the sky, but that is enclosed on all sides by a building.
dusk	The time of day when it gets dark and night is about to come.
foretells	Predicts something that will happen in the future.
lotus root	A vegetable that comes from the root of the lotus plant.
plow	A tool used for getting a field ready to plant crops. A plow churns the dirt so it is easy to plant seeds and easy for the plants to grow in the soil.
precision	Doing something very carefully using exact measurements.
rice paddy	A field where rice is grown.
sautéed	A method of cooking food by stirring it in a hot pan with a little oil.
scaffolding	A temporary structure to hold construction workers above the ground level. Scaffolding can be made from metal, wood and other materials.
secured	Held tightly in place.
specialty	Something that a person or place is known for making very well.
square each distance	To measure the diagonals of a rectangle to make sure they are equal. This ensures that the edges of the rectangle (or the walls of the rectangular shaped room) meet at 90 degree angles.
trough	A long, narrow container (often made of wood) that holds food or water for livestock animals.