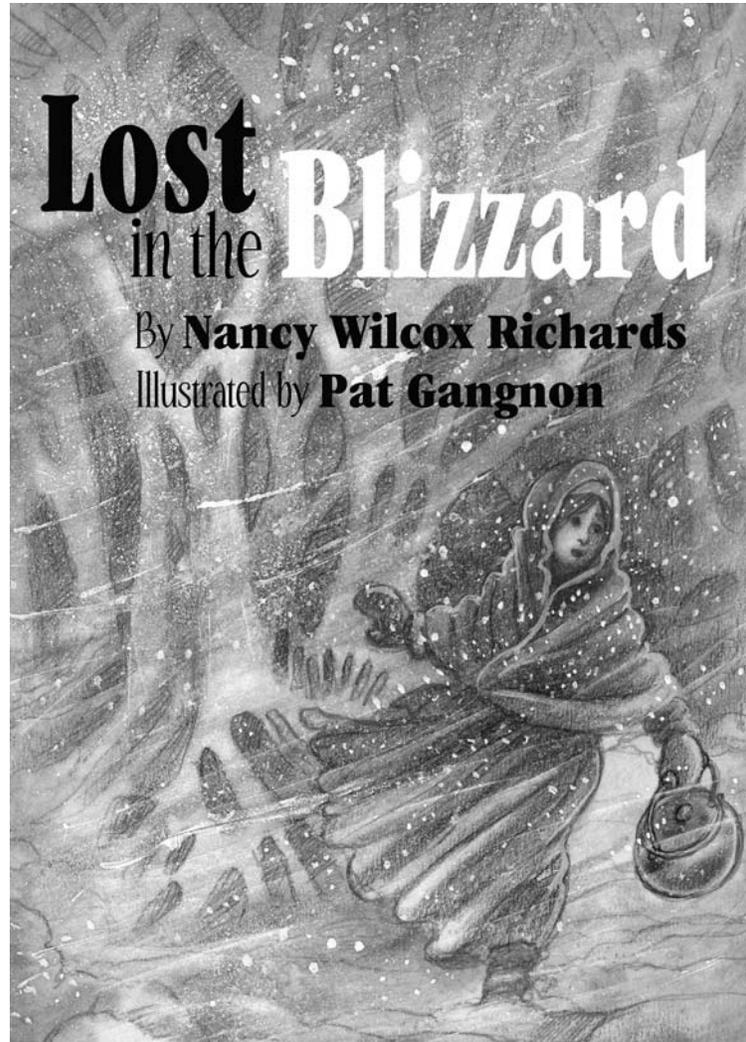


Lost in the **Blizzard**

Online Resource



By Nancy Wilcox Richards

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Editor: Sylvia Gunnery

We acknowledge the financial support of The Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities.

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Dear Colleague,

I hope this teacher's resource helps to provide some insight about activities you might do in your classroom with *Lost in the Blizzard*. It is a reflection of the kinds of learning experiences you might see in my Grade Two classroom. In reality, I would pick and choose from the activities in this resource, selecting the ones that appeal to me and meet the needs of the children I teach. There is a fairly wide range of ideas, from the actual guided reading lessons to opportunities for cross-curricular links. I hope you will find many of them useful and that they will inspire you to guide your children through their own learning experiences.

Nancy Kileen Richards

Teacher Background Information

Life in Upper Canada in the early 1800s was very different from life in Canada as we know it today. Settlers moved to a new land with the aspirations of building a better life. Often they encountered unimaginable hardships.

Family chores were divided among men, women and children. Girls typically performed jobs such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of younger children, gathering eggs, and other household-related activities. Boys helped with the planting and harvesting of crops and hunted for food.

In particular, the winters were long and difficult. Young boys were often given the job of making sure the cabin fire did not go out during the night. Sometimes this meant sleeping next to the fire and stirring the embers or adding wood to the fire. Other times, a large oak log would be placed in the back of the fire place. Since oak is a slow-burning wood, it would usually provide enough warmth throughout the night for the settlers. It was a serious issue if the fire was extinguished. To restart the fire, pioneers had to use a flint and stone, a process that was often time-consuming and difficult. The other option was to travel to the nearest homestead, which was often at least a mile away, and borrow some 'fire starter'. This chore of bringing back live embers in an iron kettle was given to young boys.

There are many wonderful on-line sources of information about pioneer life. Below are some links which you may find helpful. They will provide insights into both Canadian and American pioneer life styles.

Pioneer Life in Upper Canada:

<http://www.projects.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/pioneer/>

The Oregon Trail:

<http://www.isu.edu/%7Etrnmich/Allabout.html>



Plot Synopsis

Chapter One: Troubles

Emma wakes up to discover that the fire has gone out during the night and the cabin is very cold. Her brother, William, who usually tends the fire, is sick. Emma recognizes that this is a serious issue because people often die from illness and the doctor lives a long distance away. Emma's mother asks her to go to the nearest homestead (Robert and Hazel's) to get some fire starter. Emma has never gone there by herself. She is nervous, but wants to help her family.

Chapter Two: A Dangerous Journey

The journey to Robert and Hazel's will be dangerous. Not only must Emma test the safety of the ice on Miller's Creek before she crosses it, but she knows that a storm is brewing. She can not waste any time.

Chapter Three: Migwetch

Emma reflects back to a happier time last spring when her family made maple syrup. The snow becomes deeper and the path is harder to follow, but Emma continues on her journey to Robert and Hazel's homestead. She knows she is near an Ojibway settlement and remembers the time when William taught her the only Ojibway word she knows, Migwetch, which means 'thank you'.

Chapter Four: Storm Warnings

Emma is concerned that if she should encounter any Natives, she will not be able to communicate with them since they speak a different language. An apprehensive Emma safely crosses Miller's Creek. She arrives at Robert and Hazel's cabin. Hazel is surprised to learn that Emma had traveled such a distance by herself. Emma explains that her brother William is sick and that she needs some fire starter. After eating a delicious bowl of stew, Emma sets off for home with her kettle of coals.

Chapter Five: Lost!

The storm looms closer. As she nears Miller's Creek, she decides against testing the thickness of the ice. After all, she just crossed the creek a short time ago, and it was safe then. The snow begins to fall faster. Emma struggles to keep the coals burning. She becomes disoriented in the storm and finally realizes she is lost.

Chapter Six: A Mysterious Shadow

Emma understands that she has to go on; she can not give up. Her family is depending on her. The storm plays tricks on her eyes, creating moving shadows. A shadow seems to beckon her to follow. With

trepidation, Emma follows the shadow. The intensity of the storm increases. Emma is still trying to follow the shadow when she notices that the ice feels different. She fears the worst — that she has ventured onto black ice. Instead, she discovers that she has crossed Miller's Creek safely.

Chapter Seven: Homeward

She is still searching for her way home when she sees a set of footprints leading off the ice. Emma realizes that she has been helped cross the creek by a young Ojibway girl. Through the swirling snow, Emma spots a familiar landmark, the wooden pole fence that Pa had built. With her confidence buoyed, she sets off, certain she will reach home safely.



GUIDED QUESTIONS

Chapters Two to Four:

- How will Emma bring back the fire starter?
- What two warnings does her mother give her?
- What does “migwetch” mean?
- Why is crossing Miller’s Creek dangerous?

While the children are reading, I find it helpful to have a brief conversation with individual students. I usually initiate the discussion with statements such as “Tell me a bit about what you are reading.” or “Tell me what’s happening in your book right now.” This is a quick indicator as to whether or not the child understands the book.

Depending on your students’ interests and abilities and your own time schedule, you may wish to stop the guided reading at the beginning of Chapter Four and finish the novel another day. When this is done, it is helpful to recap what happened in the book during the last read. Have the children predict what will happen next.

Tell the children to finish reading *Lost in the Blizzard*.

GUIDED QUESTIONS

Chapters Four to Seven:

- The author writes, “It was as if darkness had a mind of its own.” What do you think this means?
- What dangerous situation occurs?
- How does Emma manage to find the strength to continue her journey?
- Who helped Emma cross Miller’s Creek?
- When did Emma know for certain that she would reach home safely?



After Reading

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Text to Self

Example: *Lost in the Blizzard* reminded me of the time my sister was sick.

Text to Text

Example: Last week I read a different book by the same author. It was called *Claire’s Race*.

Text to Real World

Example: I saw a movie about Buffalo Bill who lived during the mid 1800s.

RETHINKING

Revisit the concept of “historical fiction.” Ask the children if their thoughts about “historical fiction” are still the same? If not, how have they changed?

DECODING UNFAMILIAR WORDS

Provide each child with some sticky notes. Tell the children to use them to mark any unfamiliar words they encountered while reading. This can be used for a guided reading or independent reading practice. When the children have finished reading, discuss the strategies they used when faced with an unfamiliar word in the text.

Here are some questions which you might like to use to help guide your students’ thinking:

- Did the illustration help you with your unfamiliar word?
- Is there a smaller word inside the word that you already know?
- Did you skip the word, read ahead and then try a word that would make sense? Can you ‘chunk’ the word?
- Did you use what you already know about the topic?
- Can you take off any beginning or ending sounds, such as *re* or *ly*?
- Did you backtrack?

- Did the punctuation of the sentence help you to make sense of what you were reading?
- Did you make a link between a word you already know and the new word?

Encourage the readers to expand on their answers by asking themselves, “*How did this strategy help me?*”

Once students have decoded the unfamiliar word, they need to ask themselves, “*Does this make sense?*” If it doesn’t, they will need to try it again.

You may wish to choose from some of the additional following activities:

CHARACTERIZATION

Discuss how we get to know characters in books just like we get to know people in our class. We get to know people based on what they say and do, as well as what others around them say and do. Complete the chart (BLM 1) “Pleased To Meet You.”

TEACHER TIME-SAVING BOOK RESPONSE

This activity can be used with any books the children have read, whether it is for guided reading or independent reading practice. Once the Reading Dice are made, it is a real time saver in a teacher’s busy day. Also, it is an active and valid way for students to respond to a book.

Each group of children will need a Reading Die. In my classroom, the children are in groups of four. I use a wooden block with one typed question glued on each face. (A pattern (BLM 2) is included for a cut-out paper die.) One child from each group rolls the Reading Die to determine the question to which the entire group will respond. Children take turns responding to the question with other members of their group. It is helpful to circulate among the groups, listening to the conversations the children are having. Then ask a student from each group to tell the class what question they responded to on the Reading Die and to give a sample answer.

WRITTEN BOOK RESPONSES

Have the children complete a book response from the list. Remind them to explain “why.”

- My favorite part of the story was . . .
- I was most surprised/disappointed/afraid/ etc. / when . . .
- If I could ask the author one question, it would be . . .
- I would recommend this book to _____ because . . .
- The story made me feel . . .

- When I read the story, I visualized . . .
- I think the story . . .
- If I could give one character in the story some advice, it would be . . .
- This story reminded me of . . .

CROSS-CURRICULAR LINKS

Select a cross-curricular way for your students to respond to *Lost in the Blizzard*.

Assessment

Have each student complete the Student Self-Assessment. (BLM 3)



Cross-Curricular Links

LANGUAGE ARTS

DRAMA

Role Play:

Cut apart the charades on “Act It Out!” (BLM 4) and place them in a container. Have the children take turns selecting a slip of paper and role playing.

POETRY

There are some wonderful pieces of ‘winter poetry’ at the following website:

<http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/songspoems7.html>

Select a poem to read together or use one of your own favorite winter poems. Look at the kind of language the poet used, the structure of the poem, rhyming words, etc. Does any part remind us of *Lost in the Blizzard*?

The children might enjoy writing their own poems about winter or pioneer days.

WRITING

- Write an acrostic poem for the word SNOW or BLIZZARD.
- Create a list of Winter Safety Rules.
- Footprints played a very important role in *Lost in the Blizzard*. There is an expression that says, “Walk a mile in my shoes.” Ask the children what they think this means. Discuss the concept of walking a mile in Emma’s or William’s shoes. Have them write about what life would be like if they traded places with one of these characters during the winter of 1813.

ART

Make a Banner:

“Migwetch” is just one way to say “thank you.” Research other ways to say “thank you,” such as “merci” (French) or “dan san” (Japanese). Create a class banner displaying all of the languages and include drawings of children helping others.

Snowy Soap Pictures

Play an instrumental piece such as “Winter” from Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*. As the music plays, have the children create snow storms scenes. When they are finished drawing or painting their scenes, add realistic looking snow by mixing a batch of soap snow. This can be simply made by mixing two parts laundry soap powder with one part water. Beat it with an electric mixer until peaks form.

Spread the mixture on images of trees, roofs of houses, etc. and create snow banks in the drawings.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Design a Home:

Lost in the Blizzard contains facts about pioneer life in the early 1800s. Some of these facts are about the interior of a settler’s home. For example, when Emma woke up, she couldn’t smell the bread rising in the dough box. Many pioneer homes had a dough box located near the fire place. List information about the interior of a pioneer home described in the novel. Design a pioneer cabin. Label your drawing.

There is also some information about an Ojibway village. For example, the Ojibway village was made up of about twenty wigwams. Sturgeon was drying on racks in the sun. Record information about the village described in the novel. Design an Ojibway village. Label it.

Think about how an Ojibway village is similar to a pioneer settlement. Think about how it is different. Discuss or write about the similarities and differences between an Ojibway village and a pioneer settlement.

Create a Map:

Emma’s journey to Robert and Hazel’s cabin was approximately one mile. We know she went through a field and past important landmarks such as a pole fence that Pa had built. Using information from the novel, draw a map showing Emma’s journey. Label the cardinal directions.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Research Weather:

Pioneers could accurately predict the weather by carefully observing their surroundings. What signs did Emma notice that indicated a storm was approaching? (Answers would include: halo around the sun, smoke curling down from the chimney, “little snow makes big snow,” dark sky) Research how weather is predicted today. In your community, are there local rhymes such as, “Red sky at night, sailor’s delight.” which help to indicate the weather? Do people you know rely on the Farmer’s Almanac?

You and your students might find this website useful:
<http://vathena.arc.nasa.gov/curric/weather/hsweathr/>

MATH

Data and Graphing:

Have the children collect information on weather lore. This might include beliefs such as;

- When the bees build their nests close to the ground, it will be a harsh winter.
- If there are no holly berries on the bushes, the winter will be mild.

This can be a great opportunity to interview older people in your community because they have a heritage rich in lore.

Ask the children to choose one piece of lore and conduct a survey. The question might be “Do you believe that if the bees build their nests on the ground, it will be a mild winter?” Have the children collect the data, organize it and present the findings. It could include tallies, a pictograph or a bar graph. Remind them to give the graph a title and labels. Tell the students to use the data from the graph and write three questions they could ask a friend. Then tell the children to write three statements using the information from the graph.

Problem Solving:

That’s A Lot of Sap:

Emma and William collected 100 gallons of maple sap. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make just 1 gallon of syrup! How many gallons of syrup were they able to make?

(Photocopy BLM 5 for an overhead.)

HEALTH

Drug Safety:

Because doctors were often located far way, pioneers had to be resourceful when they became sick. They knew how to use local herbs and other ingredients to cure infections and illnesses. For example, Emma’s mother prepared a poultice for William. Discuss the differences and changes in health care practices today. Do we still use herbs and homemade remedies? Where do most of our medicines come from? Discuss the safe use of prescription drugs.

Healthy Food Choices:

A balanced diet is very important. Everyday we need to make healthy food choices. Food was not as varied as ours is today, but pioneers made good use of the land and the resources available to them. For example, Hazel made a delicious venison stew. She probably grew most of the vegetables, and Robert hunted for deer. Have the children create a list of ingredients needed to make a stew. What other foods should be added to make the meal a balanced choice? This is a good opportunity to look at Canada’s Food Guide.

Have each child bring in a vegetable. If there is access to a kitchen in your school, make a stew with your students. If not, try sampling some raw veggies with dip.

Handling Our Emotions:

Our emotional wellbeing is just as important as our physical wellbeing. Emma experienced a wide range of emotions in *Lost in the Blizzard*. Brainstorm all of her emotions in the book.

Devise a slogan for handling difficult emotions. It could be as simple as **T.H.I.N.K.**

T Try to come up with a way to help yourself.

H Have a plan.

I If your plan doesn’t work, try something else.

N Never do anything that will put you in danger.

K Keep a cool head. Remain calm.

Design a poster to show how to handle difficult emotions. Include your slogan.



Other Links

Other Books by Nancy Wilcox Richards

[Claire’s Race](#)

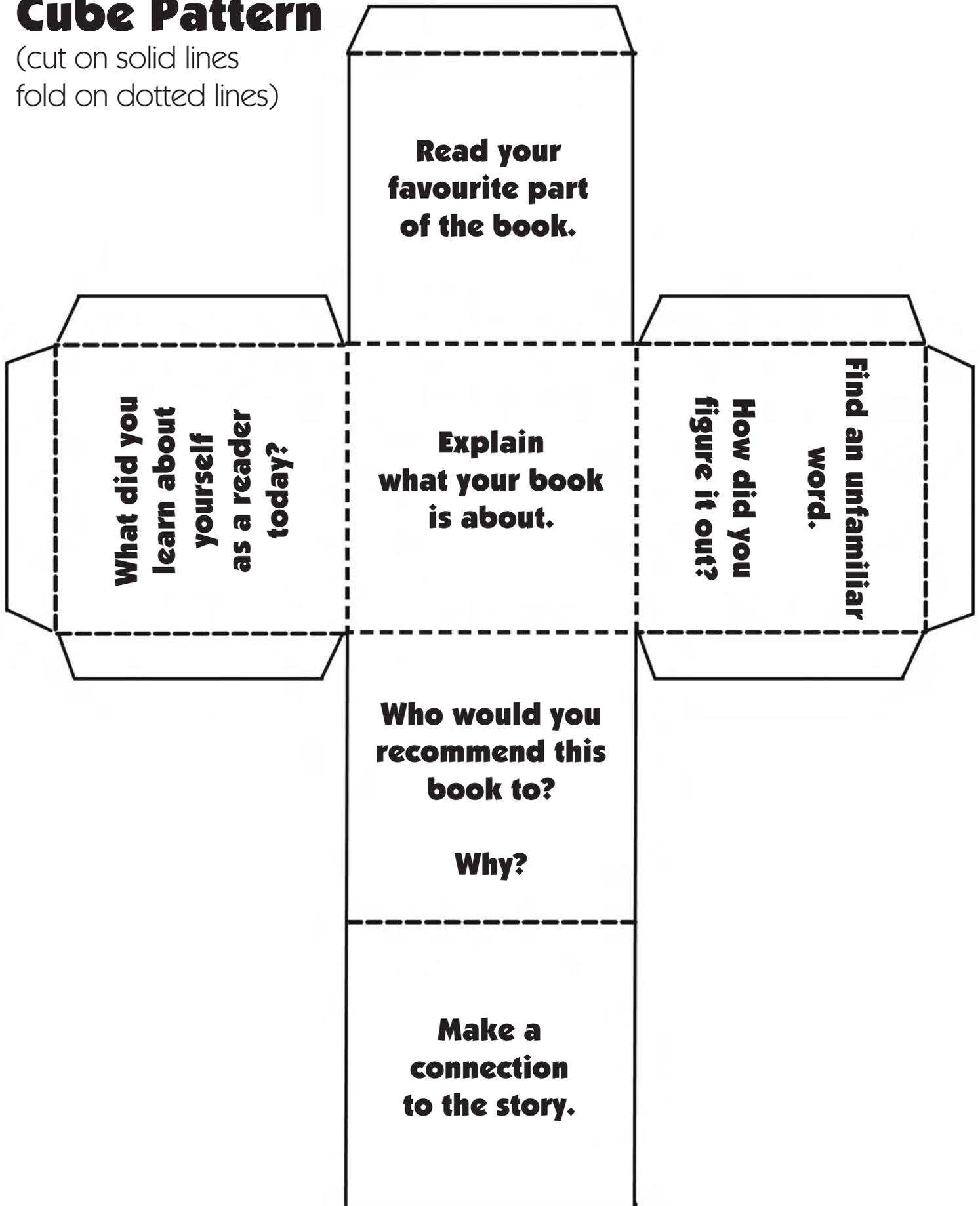
Pleased to Meet You

We are able to know and understand Emma by the things she says and does. We also get to know her better because of what others around her say and do. Complete the chart to show what you know about the main character, Emma.

Character	Says	Actions	What we know about Emma
Emma's Mother	"Think you could go get the coals?"	She looks intently at Emma.	Emma may not feel content to go alone.
Hazel			
Mysterious Shadow			
Emma			

Cube Pattern

(cut on solid lines
fold on dotted lines)



Student Self Assessment

Name: _____

Draw a  after the statement, if you did something well.

Draw a  after the statement, if you didn't do the activity well.

Draw a  after the statement, if you did a so-so job.

1. I stuck to the job and read quietly to myself.
2. If I had a unfamiliar word, I tried to figure it out.
3. I re-read the words if they didn't make sense.
4. While I was reading, I made pictures in my mind.
5. I understood this book.

Rate this book using stars

Not very good ★

Pretty good ★★

Good ★★★

Awesome ★★★★

Your Rating



Act it Out

Walk across the frozen wooden floor in the cabin in your sock feet.

Trudge through deep snow.

Slurp venison stew.

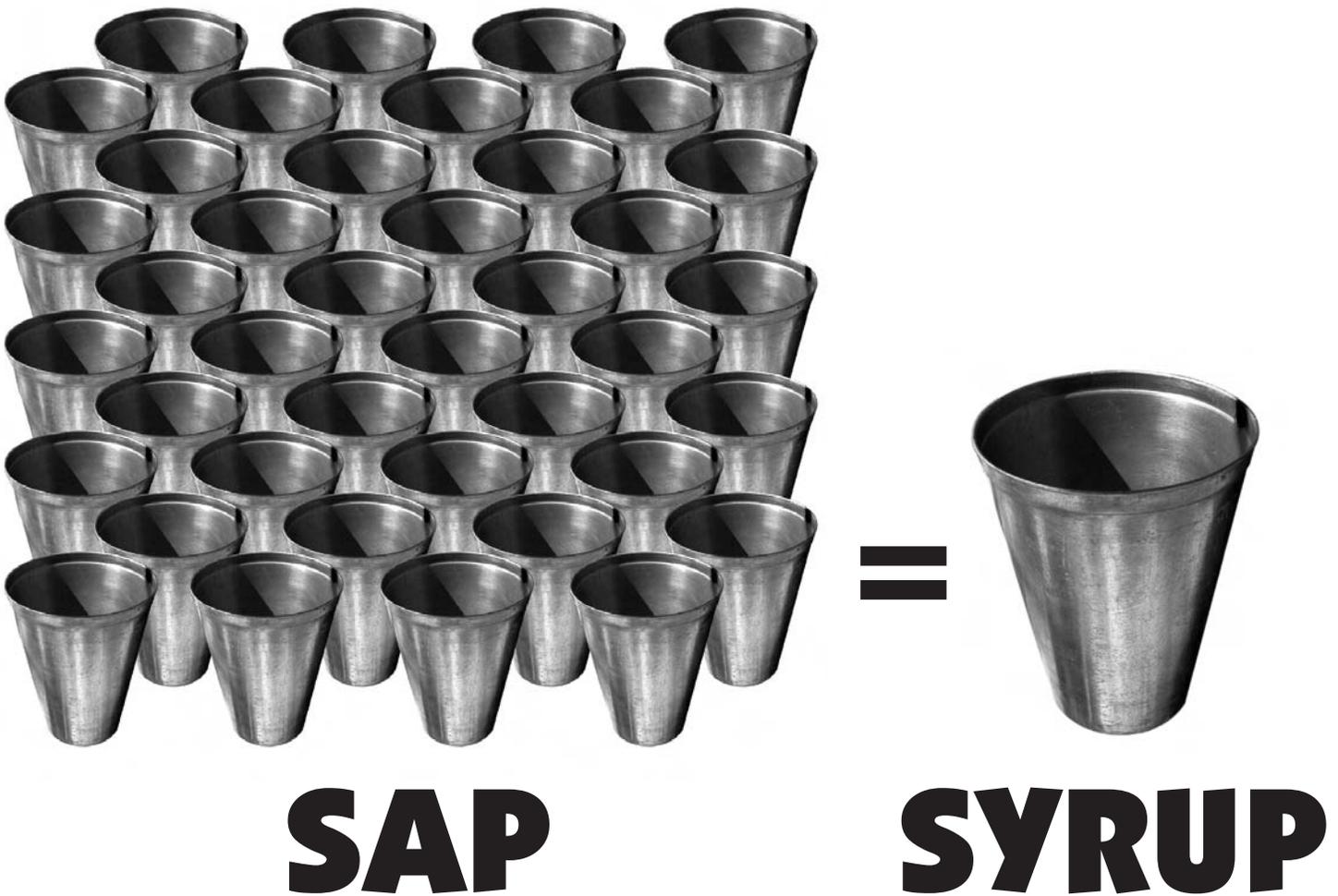
Cross a slippery, snow-coated Miller's Creek.

You are the shadow beckoning in the storm.

Search for a path but discover footprints.

That's A Lot of Sap

Emma and William collected 100 gallons of maple sap.
It takes 40 gallons of sap to make just 1 gallon of syrup!



How many gallons of syrup were they able to make?