

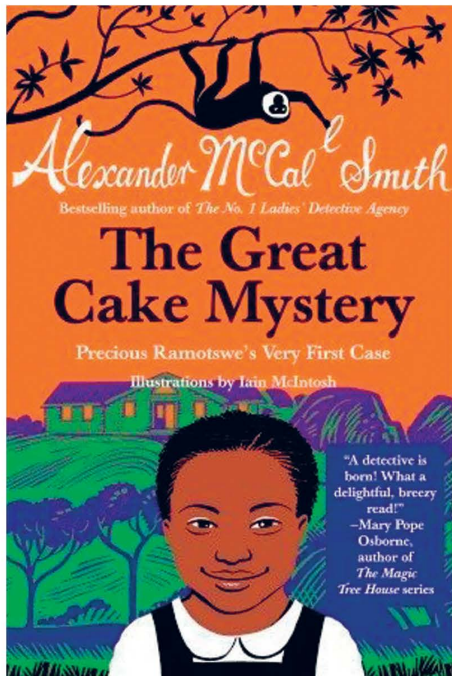
Reading ^{with} Relevance

Building INDEPENDENT READERS and THINKERS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

The Great Cake Mystery

A novel by Alexander McCall Smith



Recommended for:
Grade Levels
2nd-3rd

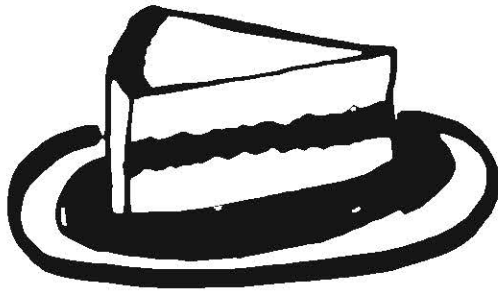
A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this Common Core Standards curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!

This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of Common Core Standards addressed through this program.
- Eight individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- An assessment to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.



Why

The Great Cake Mystery?

The Great Cake Mystery tells the story of Precious Ramotswe, a smart, young girl in Botswana who must figure out the answer to a puzzle: who is the thief stealing students' sweets at school? We chose this novel for its thoughtful attention to some powerful social and emotional themes: self-confidence, honesty, perseverance, bullying, and kindness. Students will find themselves relating to and being inspired by Precious' experiences; this curriculum will help students build connections between Precious's story and their own.

Session 6

pages 47-61

Vocabulary

muttered (pg. 50): v., said quietly, in a way that's hard to understand

refuge (pg. 52): n., a place of shelter or protection

culprits (pg. 56): n., the guilty people (or animals)

cunning (pg. 57): adj., sneaky and smart

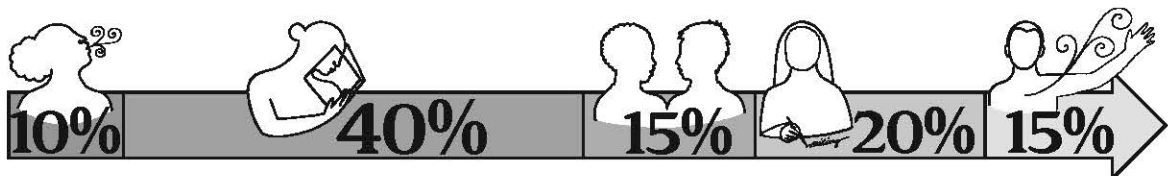
wizened (pg. 59): adj., wrinkled with age

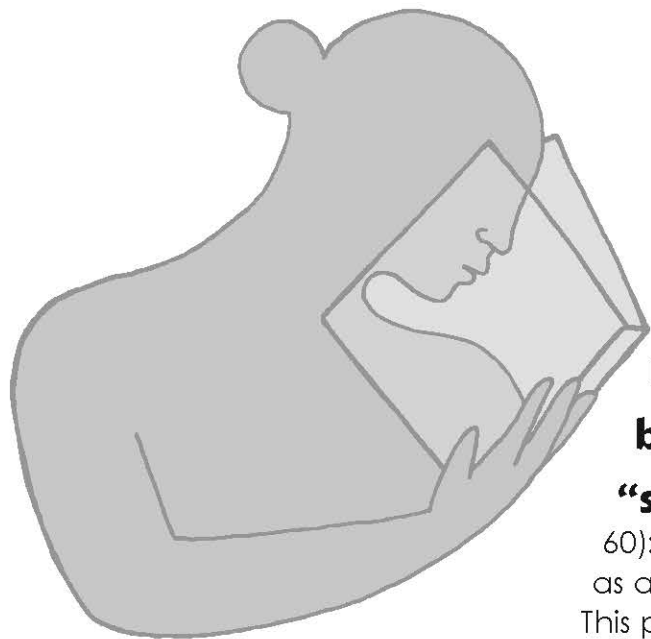
Today's Theme

Today's theme is **bullying**. Poloko feels bad because kids think he is the thief; they shout at him, ostracize him, and throw dirty looks his way. These are all signs of bullying: actions designed to make Poloko feel bad. Talk with students about bullying, which involves someone who purposely tries to hurt others by making them feel uncomfortable or scared. Bullying can include verbal actions like name-calling or spreading nasty rumors, or hurting someone else physically, like kicking, pushing, tripping, hitting, etc. It will be important to not minimize the bullying happening to Poloko, even though it doesn't involve physical attacks, as emotional attacks are also part of bullying. Check with your school to find out what resources are available around bullying.

Session 5 Recap

Sepo tells Precious he knows who the thief is: a round boy named Poloko. But Precious isn't sure. Other than the fact that Poloko often has sweets in his pocket and is very round, there isn't any evidence that he actually took sweets. Sepo forces Poloko to show his hands, and his hands are sticky. Sepo and Tapiwa yell out that Poloko is the thief. The teacher comes out as Tapiwa blames Poloko.





During Reading

“they both gave a start” (pg.

52): this expression means that they were both surprised by the sudden noise

“canopy of leaves” (pg. 59): the upper layer of leaves at the top of the trees

bough (pg. 60): a branch of a tree

“she felt as light as a leaf” (pg.

60): When Precious dreams, she feels “as light as a leaf” while swinging between branches.

This phrase is a simile; a simile helps us describe or understand something by comparing it to something else using the words “like” or “as.” (There is an appendix activity that students can use to practice creating similes.)

Discussion Questions

- Why doesn't the teacher believe that Poloko is the thief?
- What do you think about Sepo and Tapiwa's behavior towards Poloko?
- Poloko says he is innocent, so why do you think he feels so miserable?
- Why do you think Precious asks to walk home with Poloko?
- How does Precious know the monkeys from their walk are actually the thieves?
- Why do you think Precious will have to prove it to the other students? Why wouldn't they just believe her?
- What does Precious do in her dream? What does Precious realize when she wakes up?

KINDNESS

- Precious shows kindness to Poloko when other students suspect him of being a thief. While others bully him, Precious tells Poloko that she believes him, and she walks him home while other students look on suspiciously.

Describe a time when you showed kindness to another.

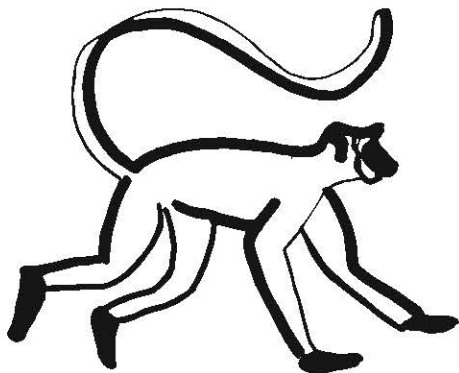
- » What happened? How did you shown this person kindness?
- » What inspired you to be kind to this person?
- » How did it feel to act in such a kind way? How do you think you made the other person feel?

ANIMAL DREAMS

- Precious has a dream that she joins the monkeys in the trees. Just like the monkeys, she can now swing fly through the air, from branch to branch! What would it be like to live like an animal?

So far, you've read about giraffes, gazelles, lions, elephants, and monkeys. Look through the book at the pictures of these animals and choose two you might like to be.

- » What kinds of animals would you choose to be like?
- » Why did you choose these animals in particular?
- » Which of these animals' qualities or traits do you think would be fun to experience?



Extension Activity

Poloko feels bad because kids think he is the thief. They shout at him, throw him dirty looks, and exclude him; these are signs of bullying. This exercise asks students to think about bullying and how different actions can help them stand up to bullying. Talk through these ideas with your class. Remind students that if they are ever scared, bullied, or don't know what to do, you are there for them and they are not alone.

Materials:

- » Bullying Handout

Name: _____

For each of the ideas below, write a sentence about why this is a good way to stand up to bullying.

Not join in.

Ask the kid who is bullying to stop.

Tell an adult.

Let them know that no one deserves to be bullied.

Ask others to stand against bullying.

Ask your school to start a bullying prevention program.

My own idea:

Poloko feels bad because kids think he is the thief. They shout at him, throw him dirty looks, and exclude him; these are signs of bullying. A bully is a person who purposely tries to hurt others by making them feel uncomfortable or scared. Bullying can include actions like name-calling or spreading nasty rumors, or hurting someone else physically, like kicking, pushing, tripping, hitting, etc. No one should be bullied. Today you'll explore a list of actions to stand up to bullying. After each suggestion, write why you think this idea might help.

Bullying

Appendix

Additional Activities

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Get to Know MFI

Moving Forward Institute is a nonprofit publisher of social justice educational materials. The organization was created by the founders and staff of Moving Forward Education, a multi-generational tutoring and mentoring organization aimed at fostering academic and emotional success for underserved students in California. Since our founding in 2003, MFE has provided tutoring and mentoring services to thousands of students and has trained hundreds of young adults to enter careers in the educational field. This reading curriculum was developed by our leadership team and its advisory group, including credentialed teachers and college professors. This program has been successfully facilitated throughout California by achieving powerful and measurable results for students and schools. To learn more about our organization, or our research and data, please contact us today.

Our Purpose

At Moving Forward Institute, we know that students can be successful learners when their social and emotional needs are met.

We empower educators to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students by using culturally-relevant and gender-responsive reading curricula.

Training and Professional Development Services

While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our in-person training and professional development services will ensure fully effective implementation of the literacy curricula.

Additionally, we offer technical support, classroom observation, and program evaluation services to help your program be successful. Contact us for more information about these services!

Contact Us

Contact us today to learn more about how the Moving Forward Institute can support your students and staff!

Online: www.movingforwardinstitute.org
By Email: info@movingforwardinstitute.org
By Phone: 510-658-4475
By Mail: 1425 Park Ave
Emeryville, CA 94608

If your students liked *The Great Cake Mystery* . . .

...they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out to Donovan's Word Jar, Keena Ford and the Second Grade Mix Up, and Charlotte's Web. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula!