

# When I Was Young in the Mountains

by Cynthia Rylant

## Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

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### SYNOPSIS

In this book, Cynthia Rylant nostalgically recalls the years when she lived in the mountains of West Virginia with her grandparents. The evocative, gentle tone of the text is extended by the softly colored illustrations. The book has no story line. Rather, it is a series of memories, each introduced by the phrase, "When I was young in the mountains . . . ."

The author recalls the simple details of everyday life with her amiable younger brother and her loving grandparents in their simple, old-fashioned cabin on a wooded hillside in Appalachia. Grandfather comes home from the coal mine and greets the children with a kiss, his lips being the only clean part of his body. Grandmother serves simple home-cooked meals, and walks with her granddaughter to the johnny-house in the middle of the night. The children swim happily in the small, muddy swimming hole and stop at the Crawfords' country store for butter on their way home. Sundays, the children and their grandparents attend church services at the schoolhouse. One day the congregation walks to the swimming hole and watches as the girl's Cousin Peter and others are baptized by immersion.

At home, Grandmother chases snakes out of the yard, and kills those that won't leave. (The children once drape a large dead black snake around their necks for a photograph.) Evenings, the children pump pails of water from the well at the bottom of the hill, heat the water on the wood stove, and bathe in tin tubs while Grandmother makes cocoa. After supper, the family sits out on the porch together; Grandfather sharpens pencils with his pocketknife, Grandmother shells beans or braids the girl's hair, and the brother pets the dogs.

In the concluding art-and-text spread, the girl-author declares, "When I was young in the mountains, . . . I never wanted to go anywhere else in the world, for I was in the mountains. And that was always enough."

### TIME LINE

*The story has no sequential frame. Rather, it is a series of remembrances about satisfying aspects of the time "when I was young in the mountains." These memories include the following.*

**evenings** Grandfather returns home from the coal mine; Grandmother serves a tasty meal; the children pump water and bathe in tin tubs; everyone sits on the porch before bedtime; a nighttime visit to the outhouse may be necessary.

**days** Swimming and baptism in the swimming hole; stops at the village store; chasing snakes from the yard; vis-

it by a traveling photographer.

**Sundays** Church services at the schoolhouse.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Rylant is a popular and prolific writer and writer/illustrator of children's picture books and early readers, middle-grade fiction and fantasy, poetry, autobiography, and young adult fiction. She was born in Hopewell, Virginia, in 1954. When she was four, her parents divorced, and Rylant went to live with her mother's parents in the small mining town of Coal Ridge, West Virginia. She stayed there for four years while her mother lived apart, attending nursing school. Rylant then went to live with her mother in the nearby town of Beaver. As a child and teenager, Rylant had little exposure to books; she devoured comic books and, later, romance novels. Finally, at Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston), she discovered literature; she earned a B.A. in English in 1975 and an M.A. from Marshall University in 1976. She then began working in the children's room of the Huntington, West Virginia, public library. She fell in love with children's literature and began writing it, at about the same time she and her husband (whom she soon divorced) had a son, Nathaniel.

Rylant wrote her first book, *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, in one hour, and mailed it unrevised and unsolicited to E. P. Dutton, who published it in 1982. Books have poured from her pen ever since. Rylant earned a master's in library science from Kent State University in Ohio in 1982 and worked as a children's librarian and part-time English teacher while continuing to write children's literature. In 1991, she became a part-time lecturer at Northeast Ohio Universities College of Medicine.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE ILLUSTRATOR

Diane Goode has created many award-winning books, both as author-illustrator and illustrator of other writers' works. She is best known for her anthologies of folk tales and songs. Goode was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1949 and grew up in the suburbs. From an early age, she loved to draw and was an avid reader. Her father, Armand Capuozzo, was Italian, and her mother, Paule Guerrini, was French; from the time she was very young, Goode traveled with her family to Europe every summer, visiting relatives and the great art museums of the continent. The repeated exposure to the world's great art inspired a great love of art in Goode. She earned a degree in fine arts from Queens College, New York, in 1972 and studied for a year at Les Beaux Arts in Aix-en-Provence. After graduation, she worked days as a New York City substitute teacher while assembling a portfolio at

night. She married fellow art student David Goode in 1973. Soon after they moved to Los Angeles, Diane got her first contract, from a New York publisher, to illustrate a picture book. Many other assignments followed, along with the Goodes' son Peter, born in 1978, who as an adult also became an artist. Diane Goode published her first self-illustrated book, *I Hear a Noise*, in 1988. The family has settled in Watchung, New Jersey, in an area with much wildlife. Goode has repeatedly expressed her joy in being privileged to work in the field of children's literature, melding her two childhood loves of art and books.

#### CRITICS' CORNER

Like much of Cynthia Rylant's work, *When I Was Young in the Mountains* is based on the author's memories of her childhood experiences. In this case, she recounts everyday activities from the years when she lived with her grandparents. Rylant writes, "My memories of those four years are so keen." The vividness of the memories is apparent in the text and further expressed in the beautifully matching illustrations. *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* wrote of the book, "This is a nostalgic piece as evocatively illustrated as it is told." *Book World* commented of the life depicted in the book, "It is a life swept clean both of clutter and of luxury. But there is a kind of poetry in it as well. . . . Simple things all, and idealized, as they should be, in both Rylant's memoir and the luminous illustrations by Diane Goode." *School Library Journal* assessed the book's design: "Illustrations and text are placed on a bed of white space, without borders, which makes them look uncrowded and imparts a great feeling of freedom." *Horn Book* admired the gentle rhythm and poetic quality of the text, as well as the beautiful composition, rich tonality, and delicacy of the illustrations. *Booklist* concluded, "Goode's soft colors and fine textures give the setting a pristine glow that's as warm as the rosy memories."

#### SELECTED WORKS BY CYNTHIA RYLANT

##### Picture books and early fiction

- When I Was Young in the Mountains* (1982)
- The Relatives Came* (1985)
- Night in the Country* (1986)
- Birthday Presents* (1987)
- All I See* (1988)
- Mr. Griggs' Work* (1989)
- An Angel for Solomon Singer* (1992)
- The Old Woman Who Named Things* (1996)
- Silver Packages: An Appalachian Christmas Story* (1997)
- Tulip Sees America* (1998)
- The Great Gracie Chase* (2001)
- Christmas in the Country* (2002)

##### Series

- Henry and Mudge (beginning readers)
- Everyday Books (board books)
- Mr. Putter and Tabby (beginning readers)
- The Blue Hill Meadows (middle-grade fiction)
- Poppleton (beginning readers)
- The Cobble Street Cousins (middle-grade fiction)
- The High Rise Private Eyes (middle-grade fiction)

##### Young adult

- A Blue-Eyed Daisy* (1985)
- Every Living Thing* (1985)
- A Fine White Dust* (1986)

- A Couple of Kooks: And Other Stories About Love* (1990)
- Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds* (1991)
- Missing May* (1992)
- The Islander: A Novel* (1998)
- Autobiography**
- Waiting to Waltz . . . A Childhood* (1984)
- But I'll Be Back Again: An Album* (1989)
- Best Wishes* (1992)

#### SELECTED WORKS BY DIANE GOODE

##### Writer-Illustrator

- I Hear a Noise* (1988)
- The Diane Goode Book of American Folk Tales and Songs* (1989)
- Diane Goode's American Christmas* (1990)
- Where's Our Mama?* (1991)
- Diane Goode's Book of Silly Stories and Songs* (1992)
- Diane Goode's Christmas Magic: Poems and Carols* (1992)
- The Little Books of Nursery Animals* (1993)
- Diane Goode's Book of Scary Stories and Songs* (1994)
- Mama's Perfect Present* (1996)
- Diane Goode's Book of Giants and Little People* (1997)
- The Dinosaur's New Clothes* (1999)
- Cinderella, the Dog, and Her Little Glass Slipper* (2000)
- Nursery Rhyme People* (2000)
- Tiger Trouble!* (2001)
- Monkey Mo Goes to Sea* (2002)

##### Illustrator

- Little Pieces of the West Wind*, by Christian Garrison (1975)
- The Selchie's Seed*, by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim (1975)
- Tattercoats: An Old English Tale*, by Flora Annie Steele (1976)
- Beauty and the Beast*, by Mme. de Beaumont (1978)
- The Unicorn and the Plow*, by Louise Moeri (1982)
- When I Was Young in the Mountains*, by Cynthia Rylant (1982)
- Peter Pan*, by J. M. Barrie (1983)
- Diane Goode's Little Library of Christmas Classics* (1983)
- Watch the Stars Come Out*, by Riki Levinson (1985)
- Cinderella*, by Charles Perrault (1988)
- Ballet Shoes and Theater Shoes*, by Noel Streatfield (1991, 1994)
- The House Gobbaleen*, by Lloyd Alexander (1995)
- A Child's Garden of Verses*, by Robert Louis Stevenson (1998)
- Christmas in the Country*, by Cynthia Rylant (2002)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

##### Cynthia Rylant

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#### **Diane Goode**

- Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 186. Detroit: Gale Research, 2000.
- Cummins, Julie, ed. *Children's Book Illustration and Design*. PBC International, 1992.
- Holtze, Sally Holmes, ed. *Fifth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*. NY: H.W. Wilson, 1983.
- Something About the Author*, Vols. 15, 84, 114. Detroit: Gale Research, 1979, 1996, 2000.

#### **Reviews of *When I Was Young in the Mountains***

- Booklist, April 15, 1982, p. 1098.
- Book World (Washington Post), Aug. 8, 1982, p. 8.
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, April 1982, p. 157.
- Children's Book Review Service*, May 1982, p. 93.
- Horn Book*, June 1982, p. 282-83.
- Instructor*, May 1982, p. 105.
- Publishers Weekly*, March 19, 1982, p. 71.
- School Library Journal*, May 1982, p. 56.

#### **Internet**

- "Diane Goode: Interview Transcript" <[teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/goode/tscript.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/goode/tscript.htm)>
- "Rylant, Cynthia": <[www.edupaperback.org/authorbios/Rylant\\_Cynthia.html](http://www.edupaperback.org/authorbios/Rylant_Cynthia.html)>

#### **GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

1. To use discussion questions to recall details, interpret characters and events, read or listen critically, and respond creatively to the story and its illustrations.
2. To expand vocabulary through context clues and word study.
3. To expand responses to the book by completing a variety of related activities, some in other areas of the curriculum.
4. To exercise artistic, craft, and dramatic skills to help interpret reading.

#### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

1. To identify members of the family in this story and the relationships among them.
2. To note the activities that make up the everyday life of the girl and her brother.
3. To be aware of the modern utilities the family does not have and of the systems they use instead.
4. To recognize the various ways in which the people of this mountain community interact with one another.
5. To notice the use of the snake motif through the story.
6. To understand how the girl narrator feels about living in the mountains with her grandparents.
7. To identify the details that set this story in another, earlier

time period.

8. To recognize the effect of repeated use of the phrase "When I was young in the mountains."

#### **SETTINGS**

As indicated by this book's title, the setting is an essential part of the story. In the book, the author recalls the comforting rhythms of life in the mountains of Appalachia (specifically, West Virginia, although the actual location isn't mentioned). We are constantly reminded of the mountain setting by the recurring opening line, "When I was young in the mountains. . . ." The mountain setting is idyllic, with swimming hole, cow pasture, woods, and simple hillside cabin tucked into the surrounding pine trees. The illustrations show the mountain background in soft blues, greens, duns, and grays, with hills, trees, and sky melting into one another. The sense of rustic peacefulness extends from the family's simple home to other parts of the community the children visit: the village general store, the schoolhouse, the swimming hole for a baptism.

#### **CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES**

##### **Community and Everyday Life Stories**

- Byrd Baylor, *The Best Town in the World*
- Margaret Carney, *At Grandpa's Sugar Bush*
- Crescent Dragonwing, *The Itch Book*
- Bonnie Geisert, *Mountain Town*
- Libba M. Gray, *When Uncle Took the Fiddle*
- Anne Shelby, *Homeplace*
- Kathleen Stevens, *Aunt Skilly and the Stranger*
- James Stevenson, *Fun/NoFun*

##### **Family Stories**

- Lenore Blegvad, *Once Upon a Time and Grandma*
- Donald Crews, *Bigmama's*
- Helen V. Griffith, *Georgia Music*
- Gloria Houston, *My Great Aunt Arizona*
- Dolores Johnson, *Grandma's Hands*
- Margo Lemieux, *The Fiddle Ribbon*
- Gloria Rand, *The Cabin Key*

##### **Nonfiction**

- Kathy Feeny, *West Virginia: Facts and Symbols*
- Doris Gove, *A Water Snake's Year*
- Karen Gravelle, *Growing Up in a Holler in the Mountains: An Appalachian Childhood*
- Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, *Slinky Scaly Slithering Snakes*
- Lucille R. Penner, *S-S-Snakes!*
- David Petersen, *Great Smoky Mountains National Park*
- Fay Robinson, *Great Snakes!*

##### **CD-ROMs**

- Blue's Reading Time Activities* and *Blue's Treasure Hunt* (Humongus Entertainment)
- Jumpstart Artist* (Knowledge Adventure)
- Reading Blaster: Ages 4-6* and *Reading Blaster: Ages 5-7* (Knowledge Adventure)

##### **Internet**

- "Appalachia": <[www.carolhurst.com/subjects/appalachia.html](http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/appalachia.html)>
- "Appalachian Music and Literature: Sounds, Sights, and Stories of West Virginians": <[www.wvaworldschool.org/caw/](http://www.wvaworldschool.org/caw/)>
- "Appalachian National Scenic Trail": <[www.nps.gov/appa/](http://www.nps.gov/appa/)>
- "Caldecott Medal Home Page" <[www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.html](http://www.ala.org/alsc/caldecott.html)>
- "Diane Goode: Interview Transcript":

<teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/  
goode/tscript.htm>

“Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier: The Henry Reed Collection”:

<memory.loc.gov/ammem/hrhtml/hrhome.html>

#### Video/DVD

Meet the Picture Book Author: Cynthia Rylant

Trav's Travels—Geography for Kids (United States of America)

(IVN Entertainment)

#### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in *When I Was Young in the Mountains* should include these aspects.

##### Themes

- simple mountain life
- childhood memories
- everyday satisfactions
- close community life
- grandparent-grandchild relations
- love and security

##### Motifs

- “when I was young in the mountains”
- natural world
- snakes
- Appalachia
- country foods
- lack of modern utilities

#### MEANING STUDY

Discuss with students the meaning of the boldfaced words from the story in the following sentences.

1. When I was young in the **mountains**.

(A mountain is a landmass that projects high above its surroundings and is higher than a hill. This story is set in the Appalachian Mountains, the great mountain system of eastern North America that stretches 1500 miles from Quebec to northern Alabama. The Appalachians are heavily forested, and their western slope contains many coalfields.)

2. Grandfather came home covered with the black dust of a **coal mine**.

(Coal is a solid fuel formed from decayed plants, found near the earth's surface and underground. Appalachia is home to many coal mines from which this fuel is extracted. Like many residents of Appalachia, Grandfather works in a coal mine.)

3. Grandmother spread the table with **fried okra**.

(Okra, also called gumbo, is an annual herb, native to Africa, that is grown widely in the United States and West Indies. Its young green pods are eaten as cooked vegetables, as in this story, and are also used to thicken stews and soups.)

4. We walked to the **johnny-house**.

(This is the outhouse, or privy, a small building that has a bench with holes in it set over a hole or trench, which people use as a toilet in place of indoor plumbing. Grandmother shows her love and concern for her granddaughter by walking hand-in-hand with the young girl through the night darkness to the johnny-house.)

5. We stood in front of the old **black stove**.

(The house has no electricity or natural gas/propane, so Grandmother cooks on a cast-iron wood-burning stove,

which keeps the cabin cozy.)

6. We went with the congregation to the swimming hole for **baptisms**.

(Baptism is the rite of entry into Christian churches, performed using water. In some churches, water is poured or sprinkled on the person being baptized, usually on the head. Other churches require baptism by total immersion in water, as with Cousin Peter in the book.)

7. Sometimes a **black snake** came in the yard.

(The nonpoisonous black snake, or black racer, is a common snake of the eastern United States. It eats small warm- and cold-blooded animals by swallowing them alive. Grandmother chases off or kills black snakes that come into the yard, so they can't eat the chicks.)

8. We walked through the **woods** to the swimming hole.

(Woods are a dense growth of trees, covering an area larger than a grove but smaller than a forest. Woods are small enough for the children to walk through on their way to go swimming. Compare with forest, below.)

9. A **bobwhite whistled** in the forest.

(Also called bobwhite quail, or quail, this bird is found east of the Rockies, north to Ontario, and south to Florida, the Gulf Coast, and Mexico. It is a very popular game bird, found in pastures, grassy roadsides, and farmlands. It is especially known for its voice, a clear whistled bob-WHITE or poor-bob-white, as heard in the evening by the family in the book.

A forest is a large tract of land covered with dense tree growth and underbrush. The family's cabin is surrounded by forests, a typical feature of the Appalachian Mountains.)

#### COMPREHENSION/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the following questions with your students. You could ask students in higher grades to write their answers to the questions in their own words.

1. Look at the pictures in the book, without reading the story. Write or tell a few sentences about one or more of the pictures. Describe 1) what the people in the picture are feeling or doing at that moment and 2) what is happening in the picture. As you read or listen to the story, see if what you wrote or told about the picture(s) was accurate.
2. Describe the family this book is about.  
(The family has a grandmother, a grandfather, a granddaughter, and a grandson. The grandparents are hard-working, kind people who love their grandchildren and give them love and security. The grandchildren are happy with their lives, feeling secure and loved, and spend their days in simple, carefree childhood activities. The girl and her younger brother seem to have a cooperative relationship. The family lives very simply.)
3. What do you notice about the appearance of the girl who tells this story?  
(She usually is barefoot, and she wears a simple chemise-style dress. She wears her hair in braids and smiles a lot. She looks sturdy and well-fed.)
4. What activities do the girl and her brother take part in while they live in the mountains?  
(They swim in the muddy swimming hole, and attend baptisms there. They stop to pick up groceries at the Crawfords' general store. They pump water from the well at the bottom

of the hill and take baths in tin tubs by the cabin's black stove. They attend church services with their grandparents at the schoolhouse on Sundays. They bring a dead snake to town. Evenings, they eat dinner with their grandparents and then sit on the porch, shelling beans, braiding hair, and petting the dogs.)

5. Does this mountain family have running water, an indoor toilet, or a standard bathtub? How do we know this? What systems do they use instead?

*(The pictures and text show us that the family has none of these modern systems. The children pump water from the well at the bottom of the hill the cabin stands on. They carry the water in pails up the hill to the house, heat the water on the stove, and then pour it into tin tubs they use as bathtubs. The outdoor johnny-house, also called an outhouse or privy, takes the place of an indoor toilet, as we learn when the grandmother goes with the girl to the outhouse during the night.)*

6. Does this mountain family have electricity? What do they use for light at night instead? How do they cook their food without an electric stove?

*(The family does not have electric service. For light, they use oil lamps and candles. Grandmother cooks on a cast-iron wood-burning stove.)*

7. What do people in this community use the swimming hole for?

*(Children use it to swim in. The church congregation uses it for total-immersion baptisms.)*

8. When do the people in this story encounter snakes?

*(The girl and her brother sometimes come across snakes in the swimming hole. Grandmother chases snakes out of the yard and garden with her hoe. Sometimes she kills a snake if it won't leave. Once, the children draped a very long, dead snake across their necks for a photograph.)*

9. How does the girl who tells this story feel about the time she spends at her grandparents' home in the mountains?

*(She is very happy, content, and secure at her home in the mountains. She says, "I never wanted to go to the ocean, and I never wanted to go to the desert. I never wanted to go anywhere else in the world, for I was in the mountains. And that was always enough.")*

10. What details set this story in an the past?

*(The people wear old-fashioned clothes—the girl wears a simple chemise dress all the time, the adult women wear dresses with long skirts, the men and boys wear long-sleeved shirts and overalls. The grandparents' house has no electricity, running water, or indoor plumbing. The Crawfords' store is very old-fashioned, full of bulk goods, with no cash register. The photographer uses an old-fashioned type of camera, with his head covered.)*

11. What feeling do the illustrations give to this story, in your opinion?

*(Answers will vary. Most critics find the artwork matches the nostalgic feel of the story very well. The soft, warm colors express the warmth and contentment of the girl's memories. The people look simple and sturdy, which matches their lifestyle. The gentle pictures match the gentle tone of the text.)*

12. Why do you think the author keeps repeating the phrase,

"When I was young in the mountains"?

*(Each use of the phrase introduces a different memory, which is described in one or two pages and pictures. When you hear or read the phrase, you know a new memory is going to be described. Also, the repeated phrase gives the text a gentle rhythm and a sense of poetry. It is like the refrain of a song, unifying the series of separate memories.)*

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Invite students to complete any of these activities that are suitable for their grade and interest level.

#### Art

1. Create an illustration of one of your favorite places in the world.
2. This book is a "Caldecott Honor Book." What does this mean? Find out more about the Caldecott Award, and create a class display of other Caldecott winners.

#### Language Arts

1. Imagine you are the boy in this story. Write some journal entries describing some details about your life in the mountains.
2. Write a story like this one about your experiences during a summer when you were "young [at the beach, at camp, in the desert, etc.]"
3. Learn more about life in Appalachia by reading Cynthia Rylant and other books set in and about this region.
4. Make up some dialogue for some of the scenes in this novel.

#### Mathematics

1. How many different illustrations are included in this book?
2. How many people are at the baptism in the book? How many of these are adults, and how many are children? How many more, or less, adults are present than children?
3. Approximately how long do you estimate the black snake is that is draped around the children's necks?

#### Nutrition

1. Grandmother serves a meal of hot corn bread, pinto beans, and fried okra. Is this a nutritionally balanced meal? Why or why not?
2. Cook one or more of the dishes Grandmother serves at that meal. Share with classmates, if possible.
3. Experiment with different recipes and mixes for cocoa (hot chocolate). Arrange for a class tasting, and vote on favorites.

#### Science and Environmental Studies

1. Create an illustrated field guide to the black snake, or another snake of your choice.
2. Research and report on coal and coal mining, with a focus on mining in Appalachia. You could also make environmental effects of coal mining a focus of your report.
3. Create an illustrated field guide to the bobwhite, or quail. Include a recording of the bobwhite's call in your report.
4. The children in this story listen to "frogs sing at dusk." How do frogs "sing"? Why do they do this at dusk?

#### Social Studies and Geography

1. Research and report on the state of West Virginia, where author Cynthia Rylant lived during her childhood.
2. Create a visual report on the U.S. region of Appalachia.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

3. On a map of the eastern United States, show the full length of the Appalachian Mountain range and highlight its outstanding features.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Act out scenes from this story with classmates, using dialogue you have written in the Language Arts activity above.
2. Imagine you run a corner store. List the items you would stock for sale.
3. Study the sky on a starry night and identify some of the constellations you see.
4. Help to teach a younger child to swim, or learn to swim yourself.
5. Find out where your home's water supply comes from, and how it gets to your faucets.
6. Invite someone to class who has attended a one-room schoolhouse to tell you and your classmates about that experience.
7. Try to get along at home for a day without running water, or electricity. How does this affect your routine of life?
8. Go to a wildlife center or zoo and observe and learn about the different types of snakes that are there.
9. Learn about the Appalachian Trail, a 2,000-mile-plus hiking trail that stretches from Georgia to Maine. Do you think you would like to through-hike the entire trail some day?

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

Depending on student ability level, have the students write their responses to one of these assessment vehicles or simply discuss their response with you, individually or in a group setting.

1. Explain what the pictures add to this story, or how the pictures fill out the story's words.
2. Describe the family this story tells about, and the community where the story takes place.

## VOCABULARY TEST

Read each sentence. Below the sentence, find the answer that could be used in place of the word in boldface (dark) type. Write the letter of the answer in the blank in front of the sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When I was **young** in the mountains. . .
  - a. old
  - b. at an early age
  - c. unhappy
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. We stopped at Mr. Crawford's for a **mound** of white butter.
  - a. pound
  - b. square stick
  - c. rounded heap
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. We walked across the cow **pasture**.
  - a. grazing grassland
  - b. thick forest
  - c. cornfield
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. After our baths, we stood **shivering** in front of the stove.
  - a. giggling
  - b. very still
  - c. trembling
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Grandmother heated **cocoa** on the stove top.
  - a. corn soup
  - b. hot chocolate
  - c. mint tea
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. We listened to frogs sing at **dusk**.
  - a. darkest part of twilight
  - b. gray light at dawn
  - c. midnight
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. We **awoke** to cowbells outside our windows.
  - a. fell asleep
  - b. listened
  - c. came out of sleep
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Grandmother would **threaten** the snake with her hoe.
  - a. pin down
  - b. throttle
  - c. warn of danger
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Four of us once **draped** a very long snake across our necks.
  - a. hung loosely
  - b. tied in knots
  - c. dragged
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The **congregation** walked through the cow pasture to the swimming hole.
  - a. herd of animals
  - b. assembly of people
  - c. covey of quails

## COMPREHENSIVE TEST A

### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The author of this book is
  - a. Patricia Polacco.
  - b. Cynthia Rylant.
  - c. Kevin Henkes.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Instead of an indoor toilet, the grandparents have a
  - a. johnny-house.
  - b. hole in the ground.
  - c. bucket in the barn.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The children sometimes see these creatures in their swimming hole:
  - a. snapping turtles.
  - b. eels.
  - c. snakes.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. To get to the swimming hole, the children cross the cow
  - a. pasture.
  - b. corral.
  - c. stalls.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Grandmother cooks on a(n)
  - a. electric stove.
  - b. wood-burning stove.
  - c. gas stove.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The girl and boy watch as this family member is baptized:
  - a. cousin.
  - b. uncle.
  - c. brother.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A photographer takes a picture of four children with this item draped across their necks:
  - a. daisy chain.
  - b. feather boa.
  - c. black snake.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A picture shows that Grandmother raises
  - a. goats.
  - b. chickens.
  - c. rabbits.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Grandfather sharpens pencils with his
  - a. pocketknife.
  - b. teeth.
  - c. file.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In the evenings, Grandmother sometimes shells
  - a. walnuts.
  - b. beans.
  - c. crabs.



**Part II: Matching (10 points)**

Read each description. Find the person on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| _____ 1. Plays with the dogs on the porch.                  | a. the girl      |
| _____ 2. Cooks corn bread.                                  | b. Grandmother   |
| _____ 3. Loves the mountains, doesn't care about the ocean. | c. Grandfather   |
| _____ 4. Runs a country store.                              | d. the brother   |
| _____ 5. Works in a coal mine.                              | e. Mrs. Crawford |

**Part III: True/False (20 points)**

Mark each sentence with a **T** if it is true or an **F** if any part of it is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Grandfather comes home from work in the evening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The children's swimming hole is muddy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The children fill the bathtub from the kitchen sink pump.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The children go to church with their grandparents on Sundays.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The girl and boy bring home light bulbs from the local store.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Grandmother chases frogs out of the yard with her hoe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The girl and her brother usually go barefoot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The girl and her brother think the mountains are a very scary place.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Grandmother uses a flashlight to light the way to the outhouse at night.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The husband-and-wife storekeepers look like each other.

**Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)**

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

- 1. What type of activities do the girl and her brother enjoy?
- 2. What kind of relationship do the children and the grandparents have with one another?

## COMPREHENSIVE TEST B

### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write the letter of the ending you chose in the space in front of each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The person who illustrated (created the pictures for) this book is  
a. Eric Carle.  
b. Diane Goode.  
c. Kevin Henkes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Grandfather works as a  
a. farmer.  
b. preacher.  
c. coal miner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. For dinner, Grandmother cooks  
a. beans and okra.  
b. bacon and bread.  
c. ham and collard greens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The children's swimming hole is  
a. very cold.  
b. clean and clear.  
c. muddy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Mr. and Mrs. Crawford run  
a. the school.  
b. a country store.  
c. the church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The children's bathtubs are  
a. wooden buckets.  
b. tin tubs.  
c. kitchen sinks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. These events take place at the swimming hole:  
a. baptisms.  
b. weddings.  
c. funerals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Grandmother chases snakes away with her  
a. axe.  
b. shotgun.  
c. hoe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The family keeps pet  
a. dogs.  
b. hamsters.  
c. canaries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The girl says she does not want to go to the  
a. city.  
b. ocean.  
c. moon.

**Part II: Matching (10 points)**

Read each description. Find the name on the right that matches the description. Write the letter of the name in the space in front of the description. Use each name only one time.

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| _____ 1. Sharpens pencils with a pocketknife.  | a. Mr. Crawford |
| _____ 2. Goes almost everywhere with the girl. | b. Grandmother  |
| _____ 3. Always smells of sweet milk.          | c. the brother  |
| _____ 4. Eats too much okra one evening.       | d. Grandfather  |
| _____ 5. Braids the girl's hair.               | e. the girl     |

**Part III: True/False (20 points)**

Mark each sentence with a **T** if it is true or an **F** if any part of it is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Grandfather takes a bath after work before kissing his grandchildren.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The children shiver and giggle after they take their baths.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Three children live with the grandparents in this story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The family buys eggs at the store because they have no chickens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Grandmother kills a big black snake in the yard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Without electric power, there is no light in the house at night.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Church services are held at the local schoolhouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The girl and boy fill pails of water from the pump at the bottom of the hill.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The girl and boy use water wings when they swim in the swimming hole.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. This story is about a happy family.

**Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)**

Write or tell your answer to one of these questions to get extra points on your test.

- 1. In what ways is the life the story tells about old-fashioned, different from today?
- 2. What type of community does this book show to us?

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. a  |
| 2. c | 7. c  |
| 3. a | 8. c  |
| 4. c | 9. a  |
| 5. b | 10. b |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. a  |
| 2. a | 7. c  |
| 3. c | 8. b  |
| 4. a | 9. a  |
| 5. b | 10. b |

#### Part II: Matching (10 points)

- |      |      |
|------|------|
| 1. d | 4. e |
| 2. b | 5. c |
| 3. a |      |

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  |
| 2. T | 7. T  |
| 3. F | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

#### Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. b  |
| 2. c | 7. a  |
| 3. a | 8. c  |
| 4. c | 9. a  |
| 5. b | 10. b |

#### Part II: Matching (10 points)

- |      |      |
|------|------|
| 1. d | 4. e |
| 2. c | 5. b |
| 3. a |      |

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F  |
| 2. T | 7. T  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. F  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

#### Part IV: Essay (Extra Credit)

Answers will vary.



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