

'Flannan Isle' Lesson Plan

Teaching focus

- Open-ended stories
- Inference
- Solving puzzles

Engagement

- Tell the story of the Mary Celeste (see Teachers Background Notes) and ask students to suggest solutions to the mystery.
- Draw on speculation from Wikipedia if necessary as prompts.
- Make the point that in real life there are mysteries which are never adequately solved or where we can never be certain of the solution to the mystery.
- This is also true of many stories.
- We are going to read a poem about another mystery where we are not told the solution. We will have to come up with our own solution based on the evidence available to us in the poem.

Scaffolding the reading

Scaffold background knowledge

Flannan Isle is a real island off the coast of Scotland (see Teachers Background Notes).

Scaffold reading purpose

Ask students to mentally note any things they are told which could be used to offer a solution to the mystery.

Reading the text

Explicit teaching

Reiterate that the poem leaves it up to us to decide what might have happened to the men.

Exploration

Ask students to list parts of poems which might be used as possible clues to what happened to the men.

Students share ideas.

Teacher leads discussion of ways in which clues might be interpreted.

Application

Set the task

Ask students to write a detailed explanation for what might have happened to the lighthouse keepers

Scaffold the task

Tell students they have a choice: they can decide on one solution and write a narrative describing what happened or they can write an explanation discussing a number of possibilities.

Supervise the task

Monitor work; praise good efforts; occasionally interrupt class to read out good examples.

Share the results

Volunteers read their work aloud to the class.

Review

Point out that students have learnt that not all stories or poems offer solutions to the mysteries they present; some leave it up to the reader to decide on possible solutions. Such stories are called open-ended. Maybe these stories are more like real life, where we do not always definitely know the solution to every mystery we encounter (students might be able to suggest examples here). While such stories can sometimes be frustrating because we never know the answer for sure, they can also be enjoyable because they leave us wondering.