

# The Trial of the Stone

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written by **Richardo Keens-Douglas** • illustrated by **Stéphane Jorisch**

**genre:** PICTURE BOOK, FICTION

**themes:** STORYTELLING  
MEDIATION  
PROBLEM SOLVING  
MULTICULTURAL TALES  
COMMUNITY  
LEGENDS & FOLKTALES

**suitable for:** GRADES 1–4

On a journey to visit his grandfather, Matt spends the night beside the road. He hides his few pennies under a stone and they are stolen during the night. The nearby village chief uses amusing and clever problem-solving techniques so that Matt can regain his money.

**Richardo Keens-Douglas bio:** One of Canada's best-loved storytellers, Richardo Keens-Douglas is a playwright, a national radio and television host, and an actor. He is a masterful narrator of the African-Caribbean experience whose books engage children's imagination.

Richardo's stories and presentations touch on the themes of faith, slavery, materialism and family, and offer an important message to children and their educators on the triumph of the human spirit: "If you believe in yourself, all things are possible." He shares stories that reflect the world of the child, nurture self-esteem and celebrate family values.

**Stéphane Jorisch bio:** Stéphane is an award-winning artist and designer. He has illustrated several children's books and lives with his family in Montreal.

# The following activity ideas ...

... are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text.

Comprehension activities:

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text and illustrations

## Before

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### STARTING THE BOOK

*Activities to set the tone or introduce the topic of the book, establish prior knowledge and interest, and develop predictions of what the text will be about.*

- A1. •Lead a discussion about losing things with questions and directions such as:  
—Have you ever lost something? How did you feel?  
—What did you do? Did you find it?  
•Think about your experience, then turn to a partner and share your story.  
—Ask your partner to retell your story to the class.  
•Make a chart of all the things that were lost.
- A2. •Lead a discussion about a situation where something is taken but no one is a witness to what happened.  
—How can we find out who was the thief?  
—How can the problem be solved?  
Answers will vary depending on the combined experiences of the children.  
•Introduce the story *The Trial of the Stone* as an example of one way to solve such a problem.

## READING THE BOOK

*Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and to encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.*

- B1.
- Read the story up to “So the boy told his story.” (page 11)
  - Brainstorm with the group about all the people who might be in this village, i.e. teacher, mother, child, carpenter, farmer, doctor, etc.
  - Write the list down on chart paper.
  - Have each child choose one person from the list and mime what s/he might be doing just before the boy wailed.
  - Freeze in a tableau.
  - Turn your back on your students and then face them in character as the Chief of the village. Tell your students (who have become the villagers) that you must call a town meeting to discuss the visiting boy's problem.
  - Walk through the tableau asking the villagers in turn what they would suggest to help the boy solve his problem, then summarize their recommendations.
- B2.
- Choose one student to be the boy and invite him to the village meeting.
  - Let villagers ask questions of the boy in order to fill in missing information. Who gave you the money? Do you know anyone who might have taken it? Will you get in trouble? How are you feeling?
  - Allow the role-playing students to make up any information as long as it fits the story. Interject with the possible solutions that the villagers thought up earlier and ask for the boy's response. Continue the questions as different students take turns playing the boy.
  - As Chief of the village, continue to review the points being made and the feelings being identified.

## READING THE BOOK

*Activities to inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.*

- C1.
- Lead a discussion about the story, ending with questions such as:
    - Do you think the Chief’s solution was a fair one?
    - Was everybody happy with the solution?
  - Compare the ending of this story with the endings of some of the students’ real-life experiences, discussed earlier.
  - Review problem-solving methods that are encouraged in your class and at your school.
  - Discuss who the students can turn to for help, where they can get help, and how they can help others solve problems.
- C2.
- Divide the class into groups of five.
  - Ask the students to retell the story in writing as if they were one of five characters: the boy, the Chief, the man in the red shirt, a villager, or the Constable. (Groups larger than five can have an added villager.)
  - Remind them to tell the story from their own point of view and to describe only the parts of the story they were actually involved in. They should also say how they felt about the outcome.
  - The group decides on the sequence in which the stories will be read so that all the points of view are heard in the retelling of *The Trial of the Stone*.