Read Aloud

“Diaries of Colonial Children”

KEY IDEA Two colonial New England ten-year-olds, apprentice bookbinder Daniel Bradford and diligent homemaker-in-training Anne Cartwright, write diary entries showing that they work very hard and enjoy a warm family life.

LEARNING FOCUS

RL.5.1 Students quote from the text to explain points the text makes explicitly and to support their own inferences.

PREVIEWING THE TEXT

Diaries of Colonial Children

Diary of Daniel Bradford of Plymouth Colony, age 10

October 17, 1631— It was cold and dark when I woke, so I stoked the fire in the hearth, and got it ready for the girls to cook breakfast. Then I chopped and stacked enough wood to get through the frigid day. While securing the shutters to keep out the wind, I discovered a hole in the daub. The sun had risen by the time I patched the hole with a mortar of clay, earth, grass, and water.

After feeding the swine and watering the horses, I was famished. At breakfast, Father sat in his big chair, while Mother, my sisters, and I found seats on the bench. When we finished eating, I left for my apprenticeship.

Who’d like to share what you’ve learned from Daniel Bradford’s diary so far?

CLOSE LISTENING TO THE TEXT

When I take the time to notice the exact words of a story, I feel like I’m in the story and I can make inferences about what I am reading. When I only skim and don’t notice all the specific words, I feel like I’m only getting a fuzzy glimpse of the characters and what they’re doing. For example, I really think that Daniel lives in hard conditions and that his life sounds difficult to me. This is my inference. To make sure I really understand the story, I can ask myself to quote a detail that shows how Daniel’s life is difficult. The story says “It was cold and dark when I woke up, so I stoked the fire in the hearth.” Asking myself to remember these words helps me really understand what is going on. The author uses precise words that give a clear picture. As I read this section, think about what the story’s words show.

By the time I walked to Master Wilkins’ bookbinding shop, I was frozen to my fingertips. But a blazing fire soon had me warm enough to stitch together the pages of a book. Then Master Wilkins had me treat the leather to make the book’s cover.
Later, at home, we ate a quick supper. Then I helped Father clean and salt the day’s fish. After that, I gathered thatch to fix the roof before winter really arrives. By the time I finished, the sun had set. I was bone weary as I said my prayers and went to bed.

In this part of the diary entry, Daniel tells us about the rest of his day. Who could tell us an inference about the details in this section of the diary entry?

Yes, this section tells us about how he works at Master Wilkins’ bookbinding shop and then thatches the roof. Who’d like to quote a detail they heard that shows how Daniel is a hard worker?

Now I’ll read part of a different child’s diary.

Diary of Anne Cartwright of Connecticut Colony, age 10

April 5, 1706— What a long day! By seven o’clock, I had been awake for two hours and had washed and dyed fleece for spinning wool. Afterward, I milked the cows and ground some grain. At eight, I served up breakfast, and then set to simmering a stew.

Then, taking advantage of the daylight, I did my sewing and needlework. I mended a gown for Mistress Walpole, tatted lace for the minister’s cuffs, sewed buttons on my brothers’ breeches, and darned a multitude of stockings.

Okay, first let’s find basic details about our new diary writer. What specific words in the text identify her and where and when she lives?

Someone else, tell us an inference you made about her, and quote words from the text that helped you.

Let’s find out more about Anne’s family as I read to the end of the selection.

The stew I made turned out extremely well, and the entire family enjoyed a hearty dinner at midday. Mother showed me more about using herbs to make medicines. If I were permitted to attend school like my brothers, I would pursue the healing sciences. I hope Mother’s lessons will allow me to someday help people in need.

After spinning the yarn I had dyed earlier, it was time for a light supper. Just before sunset, I read aloud a sermon to the younger children. When it got too dark to read, I was finally able to crawl into bed and end my day.

DISCUSSING THE TEXT

When I read to the end, I noticed that Anne’s family seems fairly contented even though they work very hard. I base that on details in the passage, including “The entire family enjoyed a hearty dinner.” That sounds nice. It sounds like they get along. Who has an inference to share and quotes supporting it?

You made your inference and you supported it with quotes from the text.
LEARNING FOCUSSES

**RL.5.1, RL.5.4**

Students determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text. They use this understanding to better understand and explain points the text makes explicitly and to support their own inferences.

REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

Let’s review what I read to you in our last session. Who would like to share the key points of our reading and discussion of “Diaries of Colonial Children”?

CLOSE LISTENING TO THE TEXT

When we quote from the text, it’s important to understand all the words. As you listen to me reread “Diaries of Colonial Children,” keep your ears open for unfamiliar words.

Diaries of Colonial Children

Diary of Daniel Bradford of Plymouth Colony, age 10

October 17, 1631—It was cold and dark when I woke, so I stoked the fire in the hearth, and got it ready for the girls to cook breakfast. Then I chopped and stacked enough wood to get through the frigid day. While securing the shutters to keep out the wind, I discovered a hole in the daub. The sun had risen by the time I patched the hole with a mortar of clay, earth, grass, and water.

I noticed the word *daub*. Now I can look for clues to try to figure out what this word means. Let’s see, the story says Daniel “discovered a hole in the daub” when “securing the shutters” and that he patched it. This makes me think a *daub* must be something like part of the wall near the window. I can look *daub* up in the dictionary, too, and find out that it is something that’s put on a wall, like plaster.

As I read, listen carefully. Try to notice words that are unfamiliar and clues that might indicate their meanings. Then we’ll discuss them and try to use our understanding of the words to help us make inferences about the characters.

After feeding the swine and watering the horses, I was famished. At breakfast, Father sat in his big chair, while Mother, my sisters, and I found seats on the bench. When we finished eating, I left for my apprenticeship.
I noticed the word *famished*. Who could tell us clues they remember that helped them understand the meaning of this word when I read it?

Right. Now that we understand this word, we can better develop an inference about Daniel.

Do you have an inference to share?

Does he ever say explicitly, “I worked hard and I was very hungry“?

So how do you know he works hard and is hungry?

I’ll read another portion.

Later, at home, we ate a quick supper. Then I helped Father clean and salt the day’s fish. After that, I gathered thatch to fix the roof before winter really arrives. By the time I finished, the sun had set. I was bone weary as I said my prayers and went to bed.

**Diary of Anne Cartwright of Connecticut Colony, age 10**

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Then, taking advantage of the daylight, I did my sewing and needlework. I mended a gown for Mistress Walpole, tatted lace for the minister’s cuffs, sewed buttons on my brothers’ breeches, and darned a multitude of stockings.

Anne says that she “darned a multitude of stockings.” Now, a **multitude** means “a great number.” You might call a crowd of a thousand people a multitude. How many stockings do you think Anne darned?

That’s not really a multitude, is it? Why would she call it a multitude? Is she lying? Who could make an inference about Anne?

Listen carefully as I re-read the end of the selection.

The stew I made turned out extremely well, and the entire family enjoyed a hearty dinner at midday. Mother showed me more about using herbs to make medicines. If I were permitted to attend school like my brothers, I would pursue the healing sciences. I hope Mother’s lessons will allow me to someday help people in need.

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**DISCUSSING THE TEXT**

I noticed that Anne says, “If I were permitted to attend school like my brothers, I would pursue the healing sciences.” I know that the word *pursue* means “to chase or follow.” How can you pursue sciences?

Yes. So I can use this to infer that Anne would want to be something like a doctor or a nurse so she could heal people.

Let’s stay with this quote from Anne about school. The exact quote is, “If I were permitted to attend school like my brothers. . .” I think many of us will be making an inference from that. Who’d like to state the inference?

Does Anne say explicitly, “I can’t go to school because I’m a girl and girls can’t“?

No, but the inference is clear, if you read Anne’s exact words carefully. If you hadn’t noticed the exact words, you might have missed that idea.