



Very Last First Time

TEACHER'S NOTES

by Jan Andrews, illustrated by Ian Wallace

Eva, a young Inuit girl, goes to walk under the ice to gather mussels alone for the first time. She has gone many times with her mother but never all alone.

While she is under the ice, she becomes intrigued with shapes, shadows and life under the sea and forgets that the tide is coming in. Eva experiences a multitude of feelings when she realizes she might be trapped. She finally finds the hole that leads to the surface again.

This is a fascinating story! It is hard to imagine walking beneath the ice, yet the author and artist portray the experience in a way that lets you believe and feel what it must be like. *Very Last First Time* would be a wonderful and creative way to begin a theme on northern Canada or the Inuit. Hidden images in the detailed colour illustrations make you want to look at the book again and again.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Language Arts—discussions, descriptive writing, vocabulary, spelling, listening, questioning, story mapping, character studies

Math—measuring, predicting

Fine Arts—dioramas, sculpture, painting, role playing

Science—dioramas, research, models

Social Studies—ways of life, Inuit culture

Healthy Living—feelings, responsibilities

VOCABULARY LIST

tanning

snowshoes

parka

tundra

ice fishing

ice chisel

mussels

tide

wedged

lever

glistened

heaving

pried

scraped

echoed

fronds

sea anemones

masses

Inuit

mussel pan

shrieked

squeezing

groped

sputtered

seabed

skittered

BEFORE YOU READ

LANGUAGE ARTS

What We Know / What We Want to Know

Prepare chart paper or sections of the blackboard with the headings **What We Know** and **What We Want to Know**. As a class, or in small groups, brainstorm and record information already known about the Inuit culture under the first heading and questions under the second.

Predicting

Discuss what the "very last first time" might mean. Record students' ideas of what the story might be about.

Visualization

Guide students through the following visualization to create their own unique space under the ice. Students write about their visualized experience. Remind them to include details and how they felt.

Close your eyes. Imagine a big TV screen in your head. I will give you some parts of the picture but you will fill in the rest of the details with your imagination. Imagine you are in Canada's north. It is cold—so cold that trees do not grow. There is no grass to be seen most of the year and you have to wear a thick parka and mittens to keep warm. You are going on a journey to collect mussels and you are going to

gather them under the ice. You get to the ice. Don't worry about how you get under at this point. See yourself under the ice now. You look up and you can see the ice. There is air for you to breath. You can hear the rocks of the seabed under your feet as you walk. Look around and keep a picture in your mind of what you see. What do you smell? What sounds do you hear? How does it feel? Take a snapshot of this picture in your mind. Take a minute to remember the details before we share with others.

GEOGRAPHY

Using Maps

Use a map to show your students where the story takes place. Use information from the map to predict what the landscape, way of life and weather might be like in the setting of this story.

Museum of the North

Tell students that they will be working on a theme study of Canada's north. Have students bring in artifacts to place in a classroom Museum of the North. These may be snowshoes, tanned leather, pictures of dog sled teams, pictures of the northern tundra, stories told by relatives or anything relating to the north. Label each item and the person donating it.

AS YOU READ

LANGUAGE ARTS

First Reading

Read the story aloud for sheer enjoyment. As you read the story, have students identify items and activities which are specific to the north and the Inuit. Compare the students' predictions about what the story might be about with the actual plot.

Vocabulary

There may be words and concepts students do not understand. Some of these words may be included in vocabulary list or can be added to the museum with diagrams and descriptions.

SCIENCE

Predicting

As you read, stop at the appropriate places to pose these questions. *What might Eva see on the sea bed? What animals would live under the ice? What would it be like under the ice? What dangers might Eva face? What could Eva do when she heard the tide coming? What could Eva do if she could not find the hole again?*

Second Reading

This book is full of hidden imagery. Just when you think you have found all the images on a page, the next time you read the story you see even more. Have students examine and identify the hidden imagery. Discuss whether or not it is relevant to the story. *Are there messages in the imagery? Does it help to create a feeling in the pictures? What is the purpose of the hidden imagery? Does the imagery add to the drawings? If so, how?*

HEALTHY LIVING

Feelings

Have students identify the feelings that Eva is experiencing during her very last, first time under the ice. How do her feelings change as the story progresses? Record words for the feelings for future reference.

Darkness

One theme that carries through the book is the feeling of the darkness below the ice. Discuss the feeling of darkness, for example, entering a dark room. Reassure your students that many people do not like the dark. Try to identify what it is about the dark that creates these feelings.

Problem Solving

Brainstorm to find out what students do or could do to overcome and ease their fears when they are in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable.

AFTER YOU READ

LANGUAGE ARTS

Descriptive Writing

Use the descriptive language in the story as an example of how to create a feeling of a place for the reader. Ask your students to write a description of a real or imaginary place.

Creative Writing

Brainstorm with your students for examples of “very last first times” in their lives. Ask them to write another story to tell about a very last first time. This writing could be fictional or autobiographical.

Another topic for descriptive writing could be: describe a time when you were supposed to be doing something and then got distracted, and what happened as a result.

Character Wheel

Students do the worksheet provided individually or in partners. Discuss Eva’s bravery and what she might be like as a friend. Have students think of Eva as a whole person and what she might be like—not just as a daughter, or a girl going to collect mussels.

Research

Students may get ideas from this story about projects they want to research, such as dog sledding, icebergs, northern lights, animals of the north, curing and tanning hides, tides, life in the sea.

Story Elements

Have students identify and briefly describe the characters, setting, problem, and solution.

AFTER YOU READ

SOCIAL STUDIES

Same and Different

Have students identify similarities and differences between where they live and where Eva lives. Discuss what is meant by Canada's "north." North to someone in Vancouver is different from north to someone in the Yukon. Use the worksheet provided to record characteristics of two locations in Canada.

ART

Hidden Imagery

Hidden imagery is becoming prevalent in art today. Bev Doolittle is one of the better known artists in this field. Study art and artists of hidden imagery. Discuss how it is used and how it is done (use of negative space, shading and line). Use the illustrations by Ian Wallace as examples. Have students choose a theme or topic. They can illustrate this and try their hand at hidden imagery.

Model of "Under the Ice"

A great activity to use to "kick off" a new theme. Students design and create a life-size model of what it would be like under the ice. In order to do so, they will need to use knowledge from various subject areas. A corner of the classroom can be used as a "set" to create this model. Once it has been constructed and detailed, students can role play-parts of the story for other students. It may be helpful for students to make a miniature version or diorama first. Dioramas are often used in museum and architectural work to create a very small copy of the "real thing." Dioramas work well in an empty shoe box. Small items from nature, pieces of plasticine and other found objects can be incorporated.

HEALTHY LIVING

Feelings – What Makes Them Happen?

Students may work individually or in pairs, to complete the worksheet provided. It would be helpful if each student or group had a copy of the book. Students choose one of the feelings and write it in a space in the left column, find evidence of when Eva had that feeling and then describe a time when they felt the same way.

Feelings

Eva was proud of herself when she went under the ice to gather mussels alone. Feeling pride is part of self-confidence. Have students think about times from the past and present when they have felt proud of themselves. Have them describe the activity, setting and what they did. What was it that made them feel so proud? Students then think of something that they will be proud of when they accomplish it in the future. Have students describe how they are or will be successful in that activity. This is similar to goal setting. They may want to set a date by which they accomplish this particular task or skill.

Responsibility

Discuss with students the term responsibilities. One of Eva's responsibilities was to collect mussels, first with her mother, then alone. Discuss as a class what responsibilities students have. *How does it feel to have responsibilities? Are there some you wish you did not have? Some you wish you did have? Should we have certain responsibilities by a certain age?*



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Date _____

Name _____

I Feel Proud

In the past

right now

in the future

My goal is

I want to reach this goal by _____

Date _____

Name _____

Character Wheel

Think of Eva in her whole life and in many different roles (e.g. friend, daughter, sister, mussel gatherer). Fill in the spaces of the wheel with words. Use what you learned through the words and pictures in the story and your imagination.

The character wheel is a large circle divided into six equal segments by three lines that intersect at the center. The segments are labeled as follows:

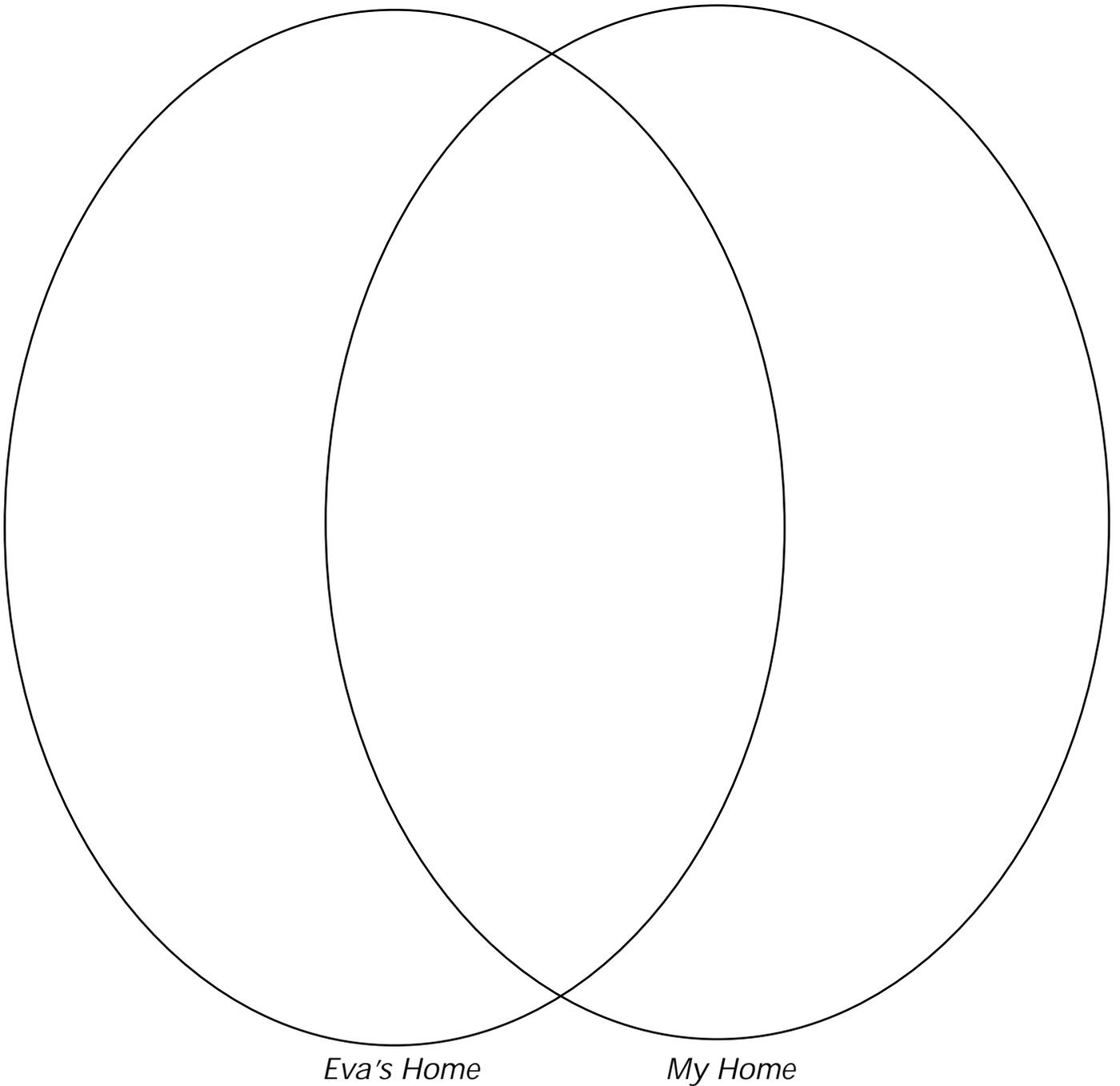
- Top segment: This is what Eva looks like
- Top-right segment: Eva lives
- Bottom-right segment: Eva likes
- Bottom segment: Eva's qualities are
- Bottom-left segment: Eva's hobbies might be
- Left segment: If Eva was my friend

Date _____

Name _____

SAME AND DIFFERENT

*Print words to tell about where you live and where Eva lives in the two ovals.
Print the words that show the two places are similar where the ovals overlap.*



Date _____

Name _____

FEELINGS
WHAT MAKES THEM HAPPEN?

Choose six feelings to use below: Some examples are: happy, sad, scared, frustrated, apprehensive, nervous, excited, proud, relieved.

<i>Feeling</i>	<i>Evidence that Eva had this feeling</i>	<i>I had this feeling when</i>