

Reading Roundup

The Wall in the Middle of the Book

Written and Illustrated
by Jon Agee

Reading Roundup
Partners



Introduction

Gather the students around you so that they are able to see the illustrations of the book. Most classrooms will have an area rug defining this space. Introduce yourself and tell the students that you are excited to share The Wall in the Middle of the Book, written and illustrated by Jon Agee.

Before Reading

When I first read this book, I thought about a time I was frightened. You may want to share a story about a time you were frightened of the unknown.

- **P** - *Have you ever been really scared about something and then it turned out to not be scary at all? Let's read The Wall in the Middle of the Book to learn how a knight (you might know the word soldier) faces his fear.*

Note - Due to the brief text, consider reading the entire book without stopping to ask questions nor engage in discourse. After reading the entire book, go back to the beginning.

During Reading



- Now that we've listened carefully to the words, let's read the story again paying attention to the illustrations. As you look closely at the pictures, ask yourself what the pictures are telling us about what's happening on the knight's side of the wall.
- Look at the cover of the book. Do you see the knight carrying a sign? Do you see a giant on the other side of the wall? In this book, the author uses another word instead of giant or monster. The author uses the word – ogre, like Shrek. Continue reading through page 5.
- **Page 5 P** – What might be causing the knight to feel frightened and why might the knight be climbing the ladder? (The knight knows there are wild animals on the other side of the wall. The knight needs to replace a brick in the wall.) Continue reading through page 9.
- **Page 9 T/T** – What is beginning to happen on the knight's side of the wall? What is happening on the ogre's side? (Water is rising on the knight's side. This is a sign of danger coming. The animals are climbing on each other to try to get over the wall. This might be even more danger for the knight.) Continue reading through page 11.
- **Page 11** Look closely at the illustration. What do you see at the bottom of the right page? The picture gives us a clue about why the animals ran away and probably made scary noises. **T/T** – Turn and talk about what this illustration tells us about the wild animals. (The wild animals are frightened of the mouse. They are more afraid than the knight. The animals are not dangerous at all.) Continue reading through page 17.
- **Page 17 P** – What is happening on the "safe" side of the wall? What is happening on the ogre's side? (Water is rising quickly. An alligator is just about to eat the bird that has been the knight's friend. The ogre seems a little worried about the mouse.) Continue reading through page 19.
- **Page 19** Oh, no! Where's the bird? Allow students to ponder what has happened to the bird without responding. Continue reading through page 27.
- **Page 27 T/T** – What surprised you? Turn and talk to your partner. (We thought the ogre and wild animals were dangerous and wanted to hurt the knight. We thought he should be frightened of them.) Turn and talk to your partner about what the knight learned about his fears. (The knight learned that sometimes the scariest things are things we don't understand.)
- Continue reading the rest of the story making sure students have time to "read" the illustrations. Invite students to notice how the knight's side of the wall is continuing to change and become more dangerous.

After Reading

- I'm thinking about the importance of the illustrations in this book. - **P** – Which illustration tells us that the knight has changed his mind about the other side of the wall? (The knight begins to change his mind when the ogre rescues him from the dangerous water. The wordless spread, depicting the knight pondering, is when the knight changes his mind – a page without a single word reveals an important change in the main character.)

Remember, many times, what frightens us is what we don't understand. Be brave enough to accept ideas and people who are different from you.

Jon Agee chose to use simple vocabulary and detailed illustrations to write The Wall in the Middle of the Book. While students should be familiar with the words, the storyline lends itself to surface and/or complex comprehension, depending on the experience of the student.

