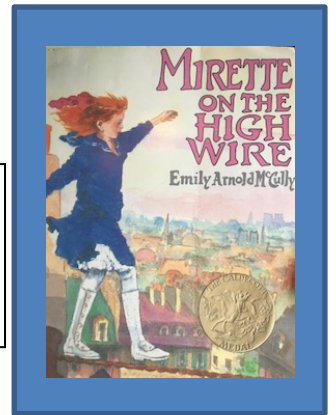


Mirette on the High Wire

Written and Illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully

Mirette becomes fascinated by Bellini, a retired high-wire walker who is staying as a guest in her mother's boardinghouse. When he teaches her how to walk on the high wire, they both learn valuable lessons about courage and friendship. This Caldecott Medal winner is based on a true story.



Possible strategies for instruction

Comprehension

- **Use prior knowledge to connect with text**
 - Before reading, ask students, “Have you ever been to a circus? What did you see and hear? Did you see anyone walking across a thin wire way up in the air? Have you ever seen a high-wire walker on TV? Were you excited and curious about what you saw and heard? Today we are going to read a story about a girl, Mirette [show cover of book] who meets a retired high-wire walker, Bellini, and becomes very curious about walking on a high wire. Mirette and Bellini learn important lessons about courage and friendship.”
- **Predict what will happen; use text to confirm**
 - P. 4—“Mirette is ‘enchanted’ and thinks that walking on a high wire ‘must be the most magical’ thing a person could do. Her feet wanted to ‘jump up on the wire beside Bellini.’ What do you think will happen next? Let’s read on to find out! Does she walk on the high wire?” (No.)
 - P. 7—“Mirette finally works up the courage to ask Bellini if she can walk on the high wire. She watches him every day. What do you predict (think) will happen next? Does she walk on the high wire?” (Yes! Use the pictures and text on pages 8 and 9 to confirm.)
 - P. 11—“After she loses her balance and jumps down, what do you think will happen next? Do you think she’ll quit walking on the high wire?”
 - P. 15—“Mirette has learned a lot about Bellini’s past as a famous high-wire walker, hasn’t she? What do you predict Mirette will do now? What do you think Bellini will do?”
 - P. 17—“Mirette wants to do the things that Bellini did on the high wire, but Bellini tells her that he is afraid. Do you think Bellini will *make* the fear leave as Mirette suggested? How?”

- P. 25–27—“Does Bellini *make* the fear leave? How? Does Mirette ever walk on the high wire again? How do you know? To become better readers, we should predict (think about) what will happen next while we’re reading, then use the text (words and pictures) to confirm if our predictions are correct.”
- **Compare and contrast within and between text**
 - This text can also be used to teach similes and metaphors. Use the following examples:
 - P. 4—“Her feet tingled, as if they wanted to jump up on the wire beside Bellini.”
 - P. 7—“He would slide his feet onto the wire, cast his eyes ahead, and cross without ever looking down, as if in a trance.”
 - P. 8—“Her arms flailed like windmills.”
 - P. 15 (metaphor)—“the man had the nerves of an iceberg”
 - P. 18—“Now Bellini’s fear was like a cloud casting its black shadow on all she had learned from him.”
 - P. 24—“For a moment she was as frozen as Bellini was.”

Accuracy

- **Cross Checking . . . Do the pictures and/or words look right? Do they sound right? Do they make sense?**
 - Introduce (or review) Cross Checking with hand motions for a word you don’t know . . . Does it look right? Does it sound right? Does it make sense?
 - P. 1—“I’m come to the last word on this page, and I see ‘s-t-e-w.’ I try to say the word with a long *e* and a *w* sound. It doesn’t sound right, and it doesn’t make sense. I need to try Cross Checking. Do the pictures and/or words look right? Do they sound right? Do they make sense? Right away, I look at the picture to help. Do you see anything in the picture that would help? Yes! What other sound can e-w make? I try that sound and reread the sentence. Does *stew* make sense? Yes!”
 - P. 2—Read this passage: “She was a good _____ too. Nothing pleased her more than to overhear the vagabond players tell of their adventures in this town and that along the road.” “I try to read this word [*point to the word* listener] and I ask myself if the pictures/words look right, if they sound right, and if they make sense. Then I go back to the beginning of the sentence to cross check. ‘She was a good listener too.’”

- **Flip the sound**

- P. 3—Read the sentence “I will take my _____ alone.” Say the word *meals* as “mels.” Ask, “What other sound can the letter *e* make? Yes, the long *e* says its name! Let’s try that: meals. “I will take my meals alone.” Do you see how I flipped the sound from a short *e* to a long *e* [*holding palm up, then flipping hand over*]? Let’s try that together.”
- P. 7—Read the sentence “He would s-l-i-d his feet onto the wire.” “Is that a word? Yes. Does it make sense in this sentence? No. What other sound could *i* make? I also know that the magic *e* makes the *i* say its name, so that word would be *slide*.” (Reread the sentence.) “He would slide his feet onto the wire.”
- P. 10—“Usually when we flip the sound, it’s with a vowel. Now, try this with your elbow partner after I read the sentence to try to read the word. “Never let your eyes _____.” Is that last word str-a (like *apple*) -y (like *yellow*)? Flip the sound with your elbow partner and tell me the word. Use your hand motion to flip the sound.”

Fluency

- **Use punctuation to enhance phrasing and prosody**

- This text provides many opportunities to use intonation and expression while reading. When using this strategy, think aloud and tell your students to notice the up and down of your voice. Explain to them why your tone changes as you read a question compared with a statement. Model how a robot would sound and how we don’t want to sound that way, because expression helps us understand what we read.
 - P. 4—“The next afternoon, when Mirette came for the sheets, there was the stranger, crossing the courtyard on the air!” (Model using expression in your voice to show how the author uses an exclamation point and even commas for pauses to help us understand what the sentence is saying.)
 - P. 6—“Excuse me, Monsieur Bellini, *I* [*italics*] want to learn to do that!” (Model pausing at the commas, the emphasis on *I*, and the exclamation at the end.)
 - P. 11—“I will never ever fall again!” Mirette shouted.
 - P. 12—“What a shock to see him here!” he exclaimed. ‘See who?’ asked a mime.” (Model by having your voice sound excited with the exclamation mark and go up with the question mark.)

- P. 13—“Why, the great Bellini! Didn’t you know he was in the room at the back?”
‘Bellini . . . the one who crossed Niagara Falls on a thousand-foot wire in ten minutes?’ asked the mime.” (Model by having your voice sound excited with the exclamation mark and go up with the question mark, and pause with the ellipsis.)
- P. 16—“‘Is it true?’ she cried. ‘You did all those things? Why didn’t you tell me? I want to do them too! I want to go with you!’” (Model a tone of excitement and questions.)
- P. 17—Read with emphasis on italicized words, questions, and exclamations.
- P. 22—“ . . . return of the great Bellini!’ he was yelling. Could it be? Mirette’s heart hammered in her chest.” (Model how words can also suggest expression—*yelling* and *hammered*.)
- P. 26–27 . . . “‘Brava! Bravo!’ roared the crowd. ‘Protégée of the Great Bellini!’ shouted the agent. He was beside himself, already planning the world tour of Bellini and Mirette.” (Model a tone of exclamation aided by words such as *shouted* and *beside himself*.)

Expand Vocabulary

- **Tune In to Interesting Words and Use New Vocabulary in Speaking and Writing**
 - Select two or three words from the text to focus on. Introduce them to students. When coming across them in reading, say them, have students say them, write them, add them to the word collector, and continue to revisit these words daily to provide multiple exposures and enhance comprehension. Students may also choose to add these words to their Table Talk books so they can take them home and read their own sentences with the words to their parents.
 - Possible choices are *devoured* (p. 1), *overhear* (p. 2), *retired* (p. 3), *enchanted* (p. 4), *courage* (p. 5), *sighed* (p. 5), *trance* (p. 6), *casting* (pp. 7 and 18), *flailed* (p. 8), *managed* (p. 9), *wavering* (p. 9), *strict* (p. 10), *shock* (p. 12), *exclaimed* (p. 12), *hesitated* (p. 17), *astonished* (p. 17), *disappoint* (p. 19), *succeed* (p. 19), *securing* (p. 20), *commotion* (p. 22), *hubbub* (p. 22), *imagined* (p. 26), and *pupil* (p. 27).

This text can be used with nearly any strategy on the CAFE Menu. The above strategies are a highlighted collection to use as a springboard for further instruction.