

Thinking Aloud With a Narrative Picture Book in Grades K–2

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña

Overview

Every Sunday after church, CJ takes a crosstown bus with his grandmother. At the start of the book, he questions this routine, but the tender moments with his Nana help him to understand the beauty in his community and in everyday life. This book has racked up multiple awards, including a 2016 Newbery Medal, a 2016 Caldecott Honor, a 2016 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor, a 2015 *New York Times* Book Review Notable Children’s Book, and a 2015 *Wall Street Journal* Best Children’s Book.

Lexile Framework: 610L

Guided Reading Level: M

What the Text Says	What I Say	The Comprehension Strategy I Model
... which freckled CJ’s shirt and dripped down his nose. (p. 2)	<i>The author doesn’t tell me CJ’s exact age, but this information makes me think he is a child. He is skipping down the steps—kids are more likely to skip than adults. And being outside smells like freedom, which makes me think he didn’t go to church on his own—maybe an adult forced him to go there.</i>	 Making inferences
“How come we gotta wait for the bus in all this wet?” (p. 3)	<i>I’m getting more evidence that CJ is young. He is with his nana, which is nickname for a grandmother. I also wonder why they are not leaving church in their car. Do they live in a city, where people take buses more often to avoid traffic? Do they not have money for a car?</i>	 Making inferences  Asking questions
“Nana, how come we don’t got a car?” (p. 5)	<i>I’m noticing that the author really tries to make CJ sound like a child—he’s using slang words, like gotta and don’t got. I’m also guessing that CJ is a little embarrassed. He is waiting in the rain for a bus, while his friend gets into a car and waves. This is making me think CJ’s family doesn’t have enough money for their own car.</i>	 Understanding the author’s purpose  Making inferences
“... old Mr. Dennis, who always has a trick for you.” (p. 7)	<i>I’m not sure what she means by a bus that breathes fire or who Mr. Dennis is. If I keep reading, maybe I will find out more.</i>	 Monitoring and clarifying
It sighed and sagged and the doors swung open. (p. 7)	<i>Now I’m thinking that this book takes place in a neighborhood without a lot of money. The bus CJ is riding sounds old and used.</i>	 Synthesizing
Nana laughed her deep laugh and pushed CJ along. (p. 9)	<i>I’m thinking that Mr. Dennis is the bus driver, and that he’s very used to seeing CJ. They seem to have a routine of these tricks, which hints to me that CJ is on the bus a lot.</i>	 Making inferences
She made sure CJ did the same. (p. 10)	<i>In a nutshell, Nana and CJ are used to riding this bus and interacting with the people on it. They greet all of the passengers and don’t seem to be embarrassed to be riding the bus.</i>	 Synthesizing

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Nana hummed as she knit. (p. 11)	<i>I'm getting the sense that Nana is quite comfortable on this bus—even though it's stopping and lurching, she's humming and knitting. She's not ashamed to be riding this bus.</i>	 Synthesizing
"Miguel and Colby never have to go nowhere." (p. 11)	<i>Where are they going after church? It sounds like they have a habit of going to the same place every week after church, and the hint gotta go makes me think CJ isn't that excited about where they are going.</i>	 Asking questions  Making inferences
"... And I hear Trixie got herself a brand-new hat." (p. 12)	<i>Now I can really see that CJ and his nana always go to this place—they have nicknames for the people they see there! And Nana is so excited to go there, so much so she feels sorry for kids who don't meet these people. Why doesn't CJ feel as excited as Nana does?</i>	 Synthesizing  Asking questions
CJ gave up his seat. (p. 13)	<i>Why does CJ give up his seat? I know that it's polite to give up your seat to someone older than you or someone who can't stand as well as you can. If I keep reading, maybe I'll find out why.</i>	 Asking questions  Monitoring and clarifying
"How come that man can't see?" (p. 13)	<i>The author answered my question! I reread to find out that CJ gave up his seat to a blind man. The picture shows me a man holding a cane, which confirms that he's blind.</i>	 Monitoring and clarifying
"Some people watch the world with their ears." (p. 13)	<i>I like how the author shows Nana as firm and wise. She doesn't tolerate CJ's whining, and she makes him treat strangers politely.</i>	A Understanding the author's purpose
Nana squeezed the man's hand and laughed her deep laugh. (p. 14)	<i>I'm getting more information that makes me see how likable Nana is to everyone. Right after meeting a stranger, she is laughing with him and squeezing his hand.</i>	 Synthesizing
"... Why don't you ask the man if he'll play us a song?" (p. 15)	<p>*Note: The picture shows one of the boys holding an iPod. Be sure to point this out to students.</p> <p><i>Here's more important evidence of how comfortable Nana feels—she would ask a stranger on the bus to play his guitar for her! She also doesn't allow CJ to feel sorry for himself that he doesn't have an iPod, like the older boys. She's comfortable with where she is and how she is.</i></p>	 Synthesizing
So did CJ and the spotted dog. (p. 16)	<i>Now I think the passengers on this bus are enjoying a happy moment together, listening to music and appreciating each other's company. Even CJ—who was complaining about having to ride the bus before—joins in.</i>	 Synthesizing

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... and the sound gave him the feeling of magic. (p. 18)	<i>At first, I was confused because the bus becomes dark. CJ is lifted out of the city, and he sees crashing waves and butterflies in the moon. Then I reread, and I thought that maybe the music is making him see all these beautiful sights in his mind's eye. So he's not really seeing these things—he's just imagining them as he listens to the guitar.</i>	 Monitoring and clarifying
CJ dropped it in the man's hat. (p. 19)	<i>I'm getting more confirmation that Nana is firm and CJ respects her. Without a word, she can tell him what she wants him to do—to give money to the guitar player.</i>	 Synthesizing
"Last stop on Market Street," Mr. Dennis called. (p. 20)	<i>I want to know what's so important about Market Street. Why is Market Street so important that they've ridden this crowded bus all the way there?</i>	 Asking questions
"How come it's always so dirty over here?" (p. 21)	<i>The author is suggesting that Market Street is a poor area in the city. There are so many clues—the broken doors and the graffiti and the stores that are not open anymore—to make me think that people here are poor.</i>	 Making inferences
"Sometimes when you're surrounded by dirt, CJ, you're a better witness for what's beautiful." (p. 22)	<i>I wonder what Nana means here. Why doesn't she just tell CJ that this area is dirty because people are poor? I think it's a really important line, so I want to spend some time with it. Let me reread again her line about the dirt. "You're a better witness for what's beautiful." Maybe Nana is telling CJ to look for what is beautiful—even in places that might not look beautiful to the outside. Nana is teaching CJ to look for the positive things in life.</i>	 Asking questions  Synthesizing  Monitoring and clarifying
... the perfect rainbow arcing over their soup kitchen. (p. 23)	<i>Aha! Throughout this book, I've been wondering where CJ and Nana are going. Finally, I get an answer. They are going to a soup kitchen, a place where people who need help can get free food. Are they taking food from the soup kitchen, or are they volunteering to help at the soup kitchen?</i>	 Asking questions
... where he never even thought to look. (p. 23)	<i>This is a golden line for me because it describes exactly what is so likable about Nana—how she easily makes friends with strangers and how she is so positive. It seems like CJ admires this quality in his nana.</i>	A Understanding the author's purpose
... he said, "I'm glad we came." (p. 25)	<i>This is another golden line for me! The author shows me that there's been a change in CJ—at first, he didn't want to come here, but now he's thankful he did.</i>	A Understanding the author's purpose
... told him, "Me too, CJ. Now, come on." (p. 27)	<i>*Note: The picture shows CJ and his Nana serving food to people who have come to the soup kitchen. I had wondered if CJ and Nana came to the soup kitchen to get food for themselves, since I got the sense they didn't have much money. But this illustration makes me realize that they are there to help. This information confirms that Nana is helping CJ realize the positive things in life, like helping out people in need.</i>	 Synthesizing