

Lesson Plan 3

SPARROW HAWK RED
by BEN MIKAELSEN

HYPERION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN, 1993

Provided by California Young Reader Medal Program Activity Packet 1996-1997

Synopsis

When thirteen-year-old Mexican-American Ricky Diaz overhears his father talking with his former Drug Enforcement Agency friends, he learns that his mother's death in a car accident three years ago was not an accident. The agents want Ricky's father, Benito, to go undercover and steal the drug smugglers' signature radar plane, but he refuses to become involved again. Ricky decides to avenge his mother's death himself by crossing the border near their Texas ranch and disguising himself as a ratero, a street urchin. Ricky has become an accomplished pilot under his father's guidance, and he is confident that he can succeed. In the town of Mariposa, Mexico, Ricky meets an unusual street-wise girl named Soledad who helps him infiltrate the dreaded drug compound, Rancho Comancho. He is able to get the special Cessna 172 Skyhawk into the air but with the drug smugglers in hot pursuit. Benito realizes what Ricky is up to and struggles to convince the U.S. government to help. He ultimately must go to Ricky's aid by himself in order to get Ricky across the U.S. border safely.

Booktalk

A) You have just found out that your mother was murdered instead of dying in a car accident like you had been told. Now your father has been given the chance to avenge her death, and he wants nothing to do with it. What would you do?

If you were Ricky Diaz, you would do anything you had to for revenge. You would do anything...even if it meant going to Mexico all by yourself, breaking into a drug cartel's compound, and stealing one of their planes containing an American-made radar detector used to help the dealers smuggle drugs from Mexico. Is Ricky up to the job? Would you be? Find out what happens. Read Sparrow Hawk Red.

B) Ricky Diaz could not believe it when he overheard DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) men try to talk his dad into helping them steal a spyplane back from Mexican drug dealers and to avenge the murder of his wife. Ricky decided to do it himself, since his father wouldn't. He would cross the border, disguised himself as a ratero, or street child, steal and then fly the plane back. He had to prove he wasn't a quitter, and he had to avenge his mother; but he didn't realize that flying the plane back was not the most dangerous part of the mission. This tense, fast-paced story is totally believable and exciting right up to the sensational ending.

Suggested activities or Extensions

INTRO

Establishing background Knowledge

Help students understand the technicalities of flying and aerobatics by providing them with some information and experience prior to their reading of the book. * *Aerobatics*, By Don Berliner (Lerner Publications, 1980) gives an excellent introduction to stunt flying and the different kinds of planes that are

used. Read aloud this description of what happens when a pilot flies a loop (as Ricky does in the opening scene of *Sparrow Hawk Red*):

Even a simple maneuver like a loop strains every part of pilot's body. As a pilot points the nose of a plane up and begins the loop, the g-forces (effects of gravity) increase. A pilot begins to feel much heavier than normal. A 150 pound pilot may feel as heavy as 900 pounds. G-forces make it harder to move the controls of the airplane. Blood rushes away from the pilot's head, and the pilot may black out if the loop is too small or if it is flown too fast. The pilot has to work hard to stay in control of the airplane.

Your students can demonstrate for themselves the effect of centrifugal force or gravity in this experiment from *Stick and Rudder: The Art of Flying* by Wolfgang Langewiesche (McGraw Hill, 1972):

Hold a 1-pound chunk of wood suspended from you hand by a string. It pulls on you hand, of course, with the force of one pound. Whirl that same weight around so that it describes a circular path, and it pulls on your hand with a force of many pounds. This additional pull is not really additional weight but is simply centrifugal force, but it pulls on you hand as if it were real weight.

Be sure that a student trying this experiment does so at a safe distance from other students.

Collaborative Word Webbing

This strategy encourages students to anticipate and predict what an upcoming reading selection may involve as they think about possible associations among words found in the text. (For more examples of this strategy see *Literature and Cooperative Learning, Pathway to Literacy* by Nancy Whisler and Judy Williams).

*** Write the following words chosen from the first and second chapters of *Sparrow Hawk Red* on the chalkboard:**

- infiltrate
- airspeed
- aerobatic loop
- control stick
- biplane
- undercover
- stall
- wingman
- drug cartel

*** Explain meaning and pronunciation as needed.**

*** Choose two words from the list, write them about a foot apart on the chalkboard or on chart paper, and discuss.** airspeed stall

*** Draw lines between words that are related. If students see relationships, ask them to explain how. (Here, a possible response could be that if a plane doesn't maintain sufficient airspeed, it can stall.)**

*** Add the remaining terms one at a time to the web, discussing each one as it is added, until all words are included. Draw lines between any terms that students feel can be related to each other. It is important for them to explain why they feel the words are related to each other.**

infiltrate, airspeed, aerobatic loop, control stick, biplane, undercover, stall, wingman, drug cartel

Anticipation Guide

Before reading the novel, have students respond to the following statements. You may want to have the students work in groups of 3 or 4 so that they can discuss their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the statements. After completing the novel, have the groups revisit their responses and discuss how their thinking may have changed.

Directions: Read each statement below. If your group agrees with the statement, put a check in the Before Column. If you disagree, leave it blank.

- _____ Children under the age of 15 should not fly a plane solo.
- _____ Parents should always tell their children the truth.
- _____ It's worth making sacrifices to achieve a goal.
- _____ If you didn't have any other food, you could survive by eating garbage.

THROUGH

Technical Terms/Slang

The book contains many technical terms related to flying, and stunt flying in particular (e.g. control stick, airspeed, loop, spin, stall, wingman, throttle, "waffle" a stunt, aerobatic, puddle jumper, "chasing buzzards"). Begin a wall chart listing such terms and have students add to the list as they progress through the book. Another list could be made of the kinds of airplanes mentioned in the text (e.g. Baby great Lakes, Cessna 172, Bell X-1). Interested students could look for photographs or drawings of the different airplanes to mount on the chart.

Spanish Vocabulary

Students can keep a list of the Spanish expressions and vocabulary items that appear in the text and create a glossary.

mi 'jito, ratero, loco/a, bandido

Response Journals

Have students keep a journal in which they record their thoughts, questions, and reactions as they read the book. The following questions and/or prompts are examples that might be given to students as they read.

- **Chapter 1**
What do you know about Ricky Diaz by the end of the first chapter? What words would you use to describe him?
- **Chapter 3**
On page 21, Ricky tells his father he wouldn't want to be his father's wingman. Why does Ricky think his father is a quitter? Do you agree with him?
- **Chapter 4**
How much does Ricky know about the rateros? Find places in the text that show the information that he uses to plan his impersonation of a ratero...
- **Chapter 5**
Draw your interpretation of a scene from this chapter, for example, the marketplace in Domingo (p. 34), Ricky waving down the bus (p. 35), the Sonora desert as Ricky saw it from the bus (p. 36), the culvert, (p. 38).

- **Chapter 6**
What do you think Ricky's biggest problem is at this point? If you were Ricky, what would you do?
- **Chapter 8**
What do you know about the girl who has been watching Ricky?
- **Chapter 10**
Ricky has learned a lot about how the rateros have to live since he came to Mexico. What else does he know about their life that he didn't know in chapter 4.
- **Chapter 11**
Draw a map of Rancho Camancho as it is described on pages 87 and 88. Include as many details from the description as you can.
- **Chapter 12**
How does the author show the reader important aspects of Soledad's character in this chapter?
- **Chapter 13**
On page 107 Ricky realizes that "Soledad never waffled things." What does Ricky mean by this? What evidence does the author give?
- **Chapter 14**
"Ricky sensed that he was changing." (p.114) How do you think Ricky has changed since beginning his adventure?
- **Chapter 15**
"As for Soledad, she shouldn't have to live the way she lived." What does Ricky mean by this statement? How do you think he would like to change Soledad's life if he could?
- **Chapter 17**
Ricky treats Soledad to a restaurant meal to thank her for everything she has done for him. Make a list of the ways that Soledad has helped Ricky since she met him.
- **Chapter 19**
Why does Ricky almost give up his attempt? When does the author let you know that Ricky won't be a quitter?
- **Chapter 20**
"Dad had been right: the children weren't rateros" (p.156) How does this realization help Ricky stick to his plans?

BEYOND

Exploring the Science of Flight

There are many investigations and resources to help students expand their understanding of the principles involved in flying. Flight is the theme of the May/June 1996 issue of *Connect: K-8 Hands-On Science and Math Across the Curriculum* published by Teacher's Laboratory in Vermont (1-800-769-6199). In addition to simple experiments to demonstrate Bernoulli's Principle, there are discussions of kite flying and directions for building model hot air balloons.

The World Record Paper Airplane Book by Ken Blackburn and Jeff Lammers (Workman, 1994) combines basic aerodynamics, directions for building paper airplanes, and hints on performing aerobatics with paper airplanes, along with 100 ready-to fold airplanes.

Teachers can contact the nearest NASA Center to find out about their free resources for teachers. In California, contact:

AIMS Research Center at Moffet Field 415-604-354
Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena 818-354-6916

To locate the nearest Teacher Resource Center in other states, contact NASA CORE at 216-774-1051. You can also contact NASA on the Internet or through e-mail at: comments@spacelink.msfc.nasa.gov.

Several other organizations also provide programs and materials related to flight.

* The Civil Air Patrol has an excellent aerospace program for students, including a Cadet program for students ages 12-18. Write to:

Joan Emerson
Civil Air Patrol
Aerospace Education Division
National Headquarters
105 S.Hensell Street
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112

* The Experimental Aircraft Association has a program to provide free flights for students. To find the branch nearest to you, write to:

Chuck Larsen
Aviation Education Center
Experimental Aircraft Association
PO Box 3065
Oshkosh, WI 54903-3065

* The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association provides aviation-related materials to teachers. To find out more about their resources and programs, including "To Fly a Teacher", write to:

Janette Prince
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
421 Aviation Way
Frederick, MD 21701

Exploring the History of Flight

Some students may be interested in reading more about how airplanes were developed. Good resources include:

* Freedman, Russell. *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane*. Holiday, 1991. Newbery Honor biography.

* Lindblom, Steve. *Fly the Hot Ones*. Houghton, 1991. Describes test flights of seven classic planes.

* Maurer, Richard. *Airborne: The Search for the Secret of Flight*. Simon and Schuster, 1990. A NOVA book describing the development of our understanding of flight.

* Zisfein, Melvin B. *Flight: A Panorama of Aviation*. Knopf, 1981. Includes many illustrations.

Investigate the Problems of the Homeless

Although Ricky discovers that Soledad has a home, the book vividly portrays the struggles of Mexico's homeless children. Students may want to find out more about the phenomenon of homelessness. Are there homeless people in their area? Why do people become homeless? What community resources exist to help them? Students can invite a community worker or government official to speak to the class about the problems of the local homeless and programs for helping them. Students can plan ways that they can help, such as by participating in a food drive, collecting books to donate to a shelter, or donating school supplies

to be used by homeless children. Some students may want to read Felice Holman's *Secret City, U.S.A.* (Aladdin, 1990) about a group of homeless children banding together to create a home for themselves. The following nonfiction books provide additional information:

* Berek, Judith. *No Place to Be: Voices of Homeless Children*. Houghton, 1992. Photographs of homeless young people living in New York City shelters accompanied by their own accounts of what it's like to be homeless.

* Hyde, Margaret. *The Homeless: Profiling the Problem*. Enslow, 1989. Describes the homeless, and the personal, economic and political factors that affect them.

* *Shooting Back: A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children*. Selected by Jim Hubbard. Chronicle, 1991. Photos of their world taken by homeless children.

Responsible Use of Resources

In *Sparrow Hawk Red*, the rateros survive by becoming experts at scrounging: making shoes from old tires, sleeping in boxes or abandoned cars, and eating food that other people have thrown away. Students may want to look at issues of consumption and waste in their own lives.

* They can keep track of everything they eat over a period of several days and contrast that with what Ricky and Soledad had to eat.

* In *Buried in Garbage* (Crabtree, 1991), the author, Bobbie Kalmin, claims that "almost one quarter of the food we buy ends up being thrown out." Students could interview school cafeteria personnel to find out about waste in the school lunch program. They can monitor what goes on in their own households by keeping a list of items that are discarded in their own kitchens over a one-week span. (Note that students should make their lists as the items are discarded. They should not pick through garbage bags to find information for their list, because of the possible health dangers.)

* They can find out about food distribution programs that encourage restaurants, supermarkets, growers, and others to donate leftover food to Food Banks and other community organizations instead of throwing it away.

Constructive Controversy

The death of 7-year old Jessica Dubroff in April, 1996, as she tried to become the youngest person to fly across the United States has touched off a debate about allowing children to fly. Although current Federal law requires young pilots to be at least 16 before they can fly solo, younger children can fly if there is a licensed pilot seated next to them at the controls and actually serving as the pilot of record. Since Justice's death, however, many people have argued that the law should be changed so that no person younger than 16 could fly at all.

Have students participate in Constructive Controversy around the question "Should the law be changed so that children under 16 can not fly a plane?" (The description of the procedure is adapted from *Cooperative Learning Magazine*, Vol. 12, #1, October 1991).

1. Pairs Study: Students are placed in groups of 4. Each pair in the group studies one side of the issue, gathering facts and preparing arguments. They may consult with their counterparts on other teams as they prepare.
2. Pairs Present: Each side presents their case while the others in the group listen, except for asking clarifying questions.

3. Pairs Challenge: Each side challenges the other sides's arguments.
4. Pairs Switch: Each side prepares a new set of arguments and presents the strongest possible case for the opposite side of the argument.
5. Group Discussion: As a group, students decide which arguments are most valid from both sides, and prepare a statement, resolution, synthesis, etc., which incorporates the best thinking of the group as a whole.
6. Group Report: As a group, students prepare a report--written or oral--for presentation to the class as a whole, to the teacher, or to some other audience. All sign a written summary indicating agreement.

SPARROW HAWK RED

By Ben Mikaelson

based on Sparrow Hawk Red copyrighted 1993 by Ben Mikaelson

used with permission of Hyperion Books for Children (adapted by Danis Kreimeier and Karen Eastland for classroom use only)

Characters: Narrator - Frank - Benito - Dexter

Frank: Come in. I hope we can resolve this matter.

Benito: Resolve this matter? Is that what you call finding a missing boy?

Frank: Benito, have a seat. Based on what you told me over the phone, and with what's at stake, I called the State Department. I let them know about Ricky. Needless to say they're nervous as chickens in a snake pit.

Dexter: I think you're dreaming--blowing this whole thing out of shape. Your kid is probably down playing video games at the mall. A boy his age would hardly care about stealing an airplane. He wouldn't dare go after it unless he's dumber than we think. And suppose he did, he'd never get within a mile of the Skyhawk. Can he even fly that kind of plane?

Benito: Dexter, Ricky could fly a Skyhawk upside down under your chin. I don't know about your kid, but mine has learned to do more than play video games. Yesterday Ricky tried his first solo loop in our Baby Great Lakes biplane

Dexter: Your boy is violating the law flying solo at his age.

Frank: Easy now! It doesn't matter if Ricky could actually steal the plane-- I think we all agree that would be quite impossible. But if he were to get caught trying, he would expose our involvement. That would leave the president with egg on his face.

Narrator: Frank handed a picture of Ricky to each DEA agent, but asked Benito to sit this one out.

Frank: One more thing! Because the State Department is involved and because of the sensitive nature, I want this whole thing kept under wraps. We're dealing with a small boy who is a flier, so I'm code-naming this 'Operation Sparrow Hawk.'

Benito: What if he gets the plane in the air?

Frank: Oh, I don't think we ever have to worry about this going code red!