

Petra, Calder, and Tommy

• Library Lessons •

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

Grades
4–7

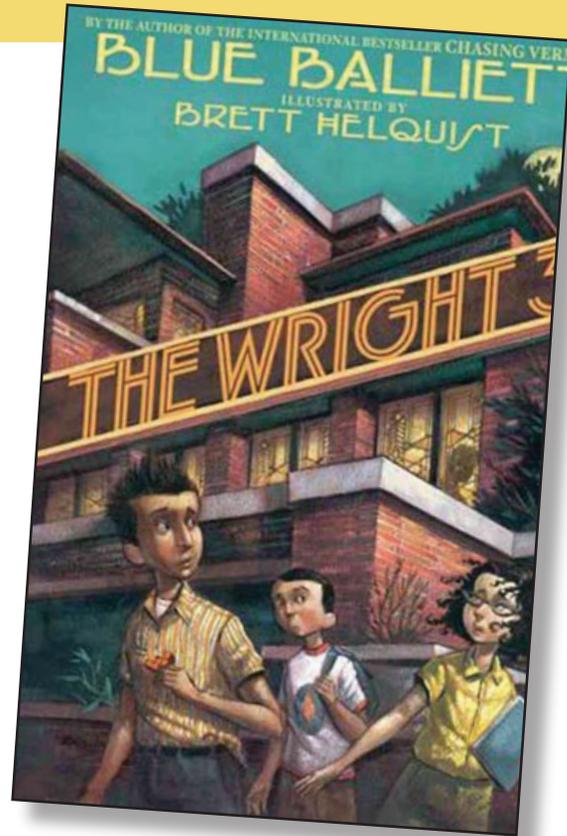
Mixing literature, architecture, history, and art with a perplexing problem, *Blue Balliett* takes her readers on another adventure of twists and turns as Petra and Calder, now joined by Tommy, uncover a buried secret, solve a mystery, and try to save the famous Robie House from demolition.

Story Synopsis

Petra Andalee and Calder Pillay, sixth grade students at the Chicago University Laboratory School made an awesome detecting duo in *Chasing Vermeer*, their last adventure. The school year may be drawing to an end but there is still time to solve another mystery. In *The Wright 3*, Calder's old friend, Tommy Segovia, has returned and joins them as they try to save Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House from destruction. This house, built in 1910, is scheduled for dismantling into sections. These sections will then be delivered to display at four different museums. Ms. Hussey's sixth grade students devise a campaign to save the historic building. As they are doing this, strange things happen around the uninhabited Robie House. First a worker topples off the roof. Then Tommy digs up a jade fish on the property. And there seems to be someone, maybe a ghost, making appearances in the geometrically designed windows. The trio's special talents—Calder's decoding skills, Petra's love for literature, and Tommy's treasure finding ability—come into play as they work together to solve the mystery and save the day.

Lesson 1: Petra's Presentation—Booktalking *The Invisible Man*

Petra Andalee is an avid reader. She is also an excellent problem solver. She has managed to combine both of these talents while she reads



H. G. Wells's classic story *The Invisible Man* and uses clues in the tale to uncover the secrets of the Robie House.

Objectives:

- The students will be introduced to the characteristics of a booktalk.
- The students will have the opportunity to write a booktalk.

Materials:

- Petra's Presentation visual (see page 4)
- Petra's Booktalk Script visual (see page 5)
- Petra's Booktalk Critique activity (see page 6)
- writing tools

Procedure:

1. Prepare materials before class.
2. Display the visual. Review Ms. Hussey's notes concerning booktalks with the students.
3. Display Petra's Booktalk Script and read it "dramatically" to the students. **Note:** This

event is hypothetical and does not actually occur in *The Wright 3*.

4. Pass out Petra's Booktalk Critique. Allow the students to work individually or in groups. The student's answers are subjective and are meant to encourage classroom discussion.

Possible answers:

1. *Petra started her booktalk dressed as the main character, the invisible man.*
2. *Yes, she asked questions to get listeners interested.*
3. *The listener could tell it was suspenseful and scary.*
4. *Yes. She read a selection from one of the chapters.*
5. *Exciting because she gave hints about the character. Dramatic because she started with "it was a dark and stormy night." Funny because she was in costume.*
6. *No, but she made the listener what to know what happened.*
7. *Answers will vary.*
8. *Answers will vary. Be aware that students who have read Blue Balliett's books know Ms. Hussey would probably not have given Petra a grade, but probably would have recognized her effort in a nontraditional and unique manner.*

Extension: Encourage students to write and present their own booktalks.

Lesson 2: Calder's Code

From anagrams to pentominoes, Calder Pillay is gifted at decoding messages. This skill is put to the test as the trio works to discover what secret messages Frank Lloyd Wright has left in the design of the infamous Robie House.

Objectives:

- The students will use a grid and coordinate list to decode famous quotations.
- The students will interpret the meaning of quotations.

Materials:

- Calder's Code visual (see page 7)
- transparency marker
- Calder's Codes Student Activity Sheets I and II (see pages 8–9)
- writing tools
- quotation books from the reference section for student investigation (*optional*)
- copy of *The Wright 3* (*optional*)

Procedure:

1. Prepare materials prior to class.
2. If a copy of *The Wright 3* is available, introduce the concept of using quotes to teach abstract concepts by reading page 8 (first full paragraph) to page 9 (second full paragraph) to the students.
3. Display the visual. Read the directions and fill in the remaining letters on the grid as a demonstration for the students. The completed quotation will read: "If you fell down yesterday, stand up today." **Note:** If appropriate, the letter line can be referred to as the horizontal axis and the number line the vertical axis. The mathematical term for the letter and number within the parentheses is an ordered pair.
4. Ask the students what they think author H. G. Wells meant when he said, "If you fell down yesterday, stand up today." Accept all reasonable answers.
5. Pass out the activity sheets. Students may work individually or in groups.
6. Check students' finished work. H. G. Wells's second quotation should read, "The crisis of today is the joke of tomorrow." Frank Lloyd Wright's quote should read, "The truth is more important than the facts."
7. Discuss the quotes and their meanings with the students.

Extension: Students may wish to create their own quotation grids. Be prepared with a supply of graph paper and directions to the quotation books in the library's collection.

Lesson 3: Tommy's Tools

.....

Tommy Segovia excels at finding unusual things; some might say he is a master at uncovering buried treasure. The problem is when he finds an unusual item, it is often difficult to identify what it actually is. Tommy is going to need to do some solid research if he is going to "hook" onto what he has dug up on the grounds of Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House.

Objectives:

- The students will review reference tools found in the library.
- The students will select an appropriate tool to use for a specific research task.

Materials:

- Tommy's Research Tools visual (see page 10)
- Tommy's Tools activity (see page 11)
- writing tools
- various reference tools to use as examples during the lesson's introduction (*optional*)

Procedure:

1. Prepare the materials prior to class.
2. Display the visual and review the list of reference tools. Show students examples of each if available.
3. Pass out the activity sheets. Read the introduction and directions to the students. Students may work independently or in pairs.
4. Discuss possible answers with the students. As long as the students can articulate their reasoning for selecting a specific reference tool, allow their answers. Possible answers include:
 1. *Newspaper, Internet;*
 2. *Biography, Internet, Encyclopedia;*
 3. *Telephone Book, Internet;*
 4. *Newspaper, Internet;*
 5. *Encyclopedia, Magazine, Internet;*
 6. *Internet (Students may also mention government documents.);*
 7. *Encyclopedia, Internet;*
 8. *Dictionary;*
 9. *Atlas, Almanac;*
 10. *Encyclopedia, Magazine.*

McREL Standards**Language Arts****Reading**

- Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.
- Makes inferences based on implicit information in texts.
- Gives and follows written directions for tasks.

Listening and Speaking

- Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Writing

- Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Math

- Knows basic characteristics and features of the rectangular coordinate system (e.g., the horizontal axis is the X axis and the vertical axis the Y axis).



*Lynne Farrell Stover has over thirty years of experience as an educator and is currently a Teacher Consultant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She has taught many teacher workshops and won Teacher of the Year in 1999 from the Virginia Council of Economic Education and from the Virginia Association for the Gifted. She is the author of *Magical Library Lessons*, *More Magical Library Lessons*, and *From Snicket to Shakespeare from UpstartBooks*.*

Petra's Presentation

One of Petra Andalee's favorite books is *The Invisible Man* by H. G. Wells. She would like her classmates to read it and asks Ms. Hussey, her teacher, if she could do a presentation to the class, "advertising" the book. Miss Hussey suggests that Petra give a booktalk and gives her a list of suggestions concerning the proper manner a successful booktalk is conducted.

Ms. Hussey's Booktalking Information Sheet

A booktalk is a presentation created with the purpose of persuading listeners to read a specific book.

A GOOD BOOKTALK CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING:

- An Interesting Introduction—Starts off with a bang and gets the listeners' attention right away.
- Some Cool Content—Informs the listener about the book's plot, characters, and setting. Discusses the story's theme or main problem. Explains what makes this book stand out from other books.
- A Delightful Delivery—Holds the listeners' interest. Is exciting, dramatic, and/or funny.
- Shows the Story—Uses the book as a prop, displaying the cover, and maybe reading a short passage from the book.

A GOOD BOOKTALK NEVER:

- Reveals the story's ending!



Petra's Booktalk Script

(Petra enters the classroom holding a copy of *The Invisible Man*. She is dressed in a large coat, gloves, a floppy hat, big glasses, and her face is wrapped in toilet tissue.)

She says: How curious would you be if a mysterious stranger wearing a large coat, thick gloves, a wide brimmed hat, and huge goggles with bandages all over his face visited this classroom?

This is exactly what happens in a very suspenseful book, *The Invisible Man* by H. G. Wells.

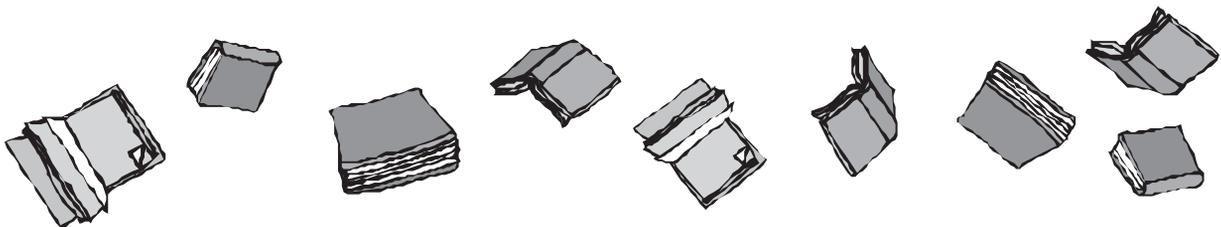
Petra deepens her voice and continues: It's a cold and stormy night when a mysterious stranger arrives at an English county inn. The man's identity is unknown because he is completely covered in clothing and bandages. The people in the village begin to gossip when the strange man spends all his time in his room, which he has turned into a makeshift science lab. Things in the English village soon become even more strange and scary when a crime wave begins and no one can ever catch sight of the burglar.

You can imagine what the inn's landlady was thinking when she (**Here Petra opens the book and reads a section from Chapter 3.**) ... "took his dinner in to him, he was already so absorbed in his work, pouring little drops out of the bottles into test-tubes, that he did not hear her until she had swept away the bulk of the straw and put the tray on the table, with some little emphasis perhaps, seeing the state that the floor was in. Then he half turned his head and immediately turned it away again. But she saw he had removed his glasses, they were beside him on the table, and it seemed to her that his eye sockets were extraordinarily hollow."

Who is this secretive man and why is his behavior becoming more peculiar everyday? What will happen when the stranger's secret is revealed? Read this classic story of what can happen when a science experiment goes wrong ... very wrong.

Petra's Booktalk Critique

1. What did Petra do before starting her booktalk to get the listeners' attention?
2. Did Petra's booktalk have an interesting introduction?
3. What was the listener able to learn about *The Invisible Man* from the booktalk?
4. Did Petra use the book in her booktalk? If so, how?
5. Would Petra's presentation be considered exciting, dramatic, or funny?
Explain your choice.
6. Did Petra give away the book's ending?
7. Do you think you would want to read this book? Why or why not?
8. If you were Ms. Hussey, what grade would you give Petra for this booktalk?



Calder's Code

Calder Pillay, a member of the problem-solving trio, the Wright 3, enjoys decoding messages. Help him finish filling in the grid to reveal a famous quote from the author of *The Invisible Man* by H. G. Wells. (Calder has inserted the letters A, D, and E on the grid for you.)

5									
4		e				d			
3		e			e		d	a	
2			a		d				
1			d	a					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I

A = (C,2) (D,1) (H,3)

D = (G,3) (F,4) (C,1) (E,2)

E = (B,3) (B,4) (E,3)

F = (A,4) (B,5)

I = (A,5)

L = (C,4) (D,4)

N = (I,4) (D,2)

O = (B,1) (E,5) (G,4)

P = (H,2)

R = (F,3)

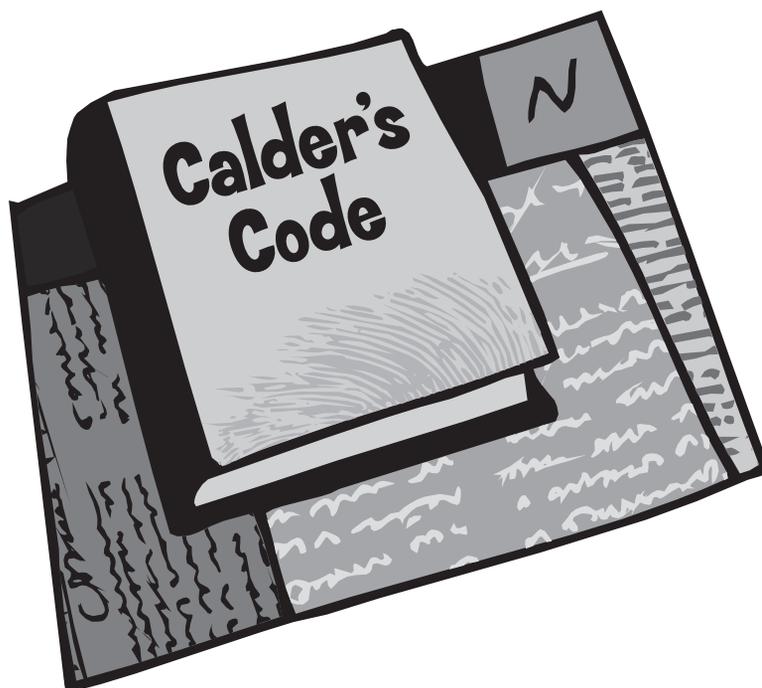
S = (C,3) (A,2)

T = (A,1) (B,2) (D,3)

U = (F,5) (G,2)

W = (H,4)

Y = (D,5) (A,3) (E,1) (I,3)



Calder's Codes

A Quote from H. G. Wells

Use the code below to reveal a famous quote by the author H. G. Wells on the grid. (The letters A, C, and D have been placed on the grid for you.) When you are finished decoding the quote, be prepared to share it with the class and explain what you think he meant by these words.

5					c					
4						d	a			
3										
2										
1										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J

A = (G,4)

C = (E,5)

D = (F,4)

E = (D,2) (C,5) (F,3)

F = (G,2) (B,4)

H = (B,5) (E,3)

I = (G,5) (A,3) (I,5)

J = (A,2)

K = (C,2)

M = (C,1)

O = (B,1) (G,1) (B,2) (F,2) (A,4) (E,4) (D,1)

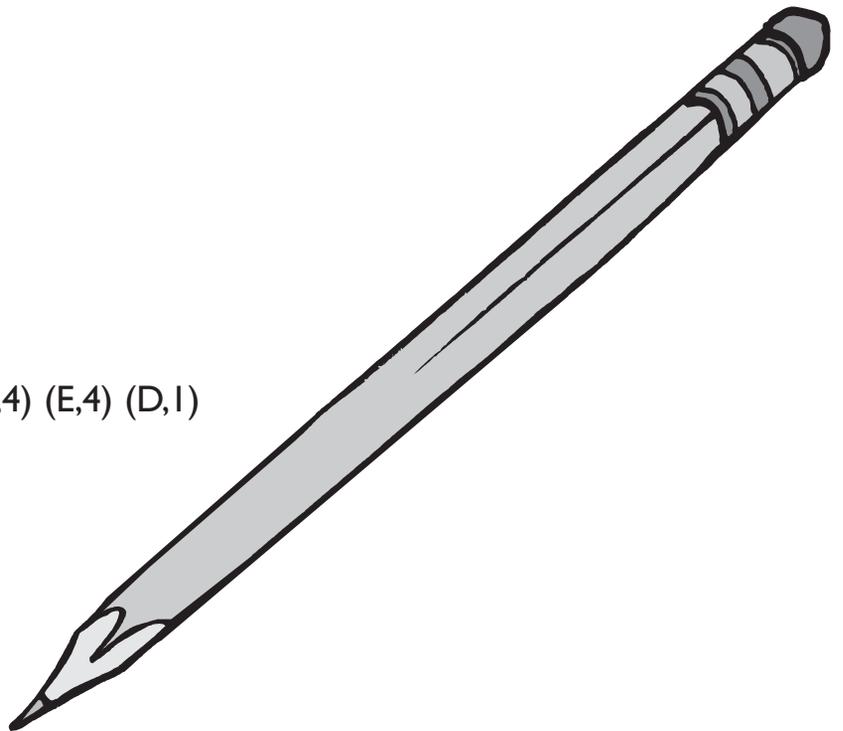
R = (F,5) (E,1) (F,1)

S = (H,5) (B,3) (J,5)

T = (A,1) (A,5) (D,3) (D,4)

W = (H,1)

Y = (H,4)



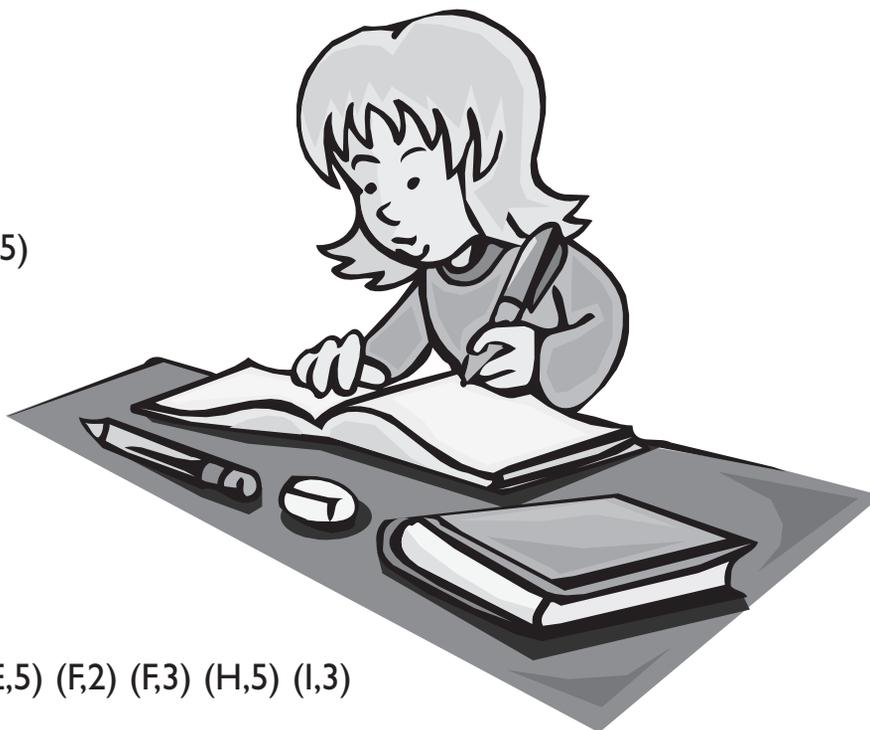
Calder's Codes

A Quote from Frank Lloyd Wright

Use the code below to reveal one of architect Frank Lloyd Wright's famous quotes on the grid. (The letters A and C have been placed on the grid for you.) When you are finished decoding the quote, be prepared to share it with the class and explain what you think he meant by these words.

5									
4									
3							a		
2			a						
1		a	c						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I

- A = (G,3) (C,2) (B,1)
- C = (C,1)
- E = (C,5) (G,4) (H,2)
- F = (A,1)
- H = (B,2) (G,2) (I,5) (B,5)
- I = (A,3) (A,4)
- M = (D,4) (B,3)
- N = (H,3) (D,2)
- O = (D,3) (E,4)
- P = (C,3)
- R = (F,5) (F,4) (E,3)
- S = (B,4) (E,1)
- T = (A,2) (A,5) (D,1) (E,5) (F,2) (F,3) (H,5) (I,3)
- U = (G,5)



Tommy's Research Tools

Almanac

An annual publication containing statistics, data, and general information



Atlas

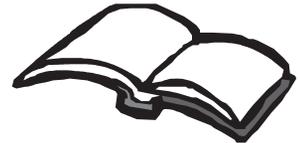
A book of maps

Biography

The story of a person's life

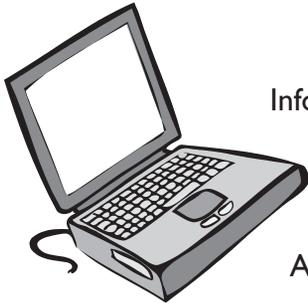
Dictionary

A book containing words and their meanings



Encyclopedia

Book organized alphabetically containing information on many subjects



Internet

Information accessed using a computer and the World Wide Web

Magazines

A periodical publication focused on a specific topic or interest

Newspapers

Current events publications

Telephone Directory

A listing of local telephone numbers and addresses



Tommy's Tools

Tommy Segovia is good at finding things on and in the ground. His favorite tool to dig with is a special device with a fork on one side and a spoon on the other. When he finds a carved stone in the shape of a fish buried outside the Robie House he is going to need other types of tools; research tools that will help him discover what it is he has unearthed.



What reference tools could Tommy use to help him locate ...

1. News concerning a worker's accident that happened at the Robie House earlier in the week.
2. Information concerning Frank Lloyd Wright's travels outside the United States.
3. Contact information for the local museums (telephone numbers and addresses).
4. The date of the last time it rained in Chicago.
5. Information about Japanese art objects.
6. Laws concerning the ownership of an item found on public property.
7. How to identify specific types of semiprecious stones.
8. The definition for "talisman."
9. The distance between the United States and Japan.
10. The significance of the fish symbol in the Japanese culture.

