

Cricket®

THEME

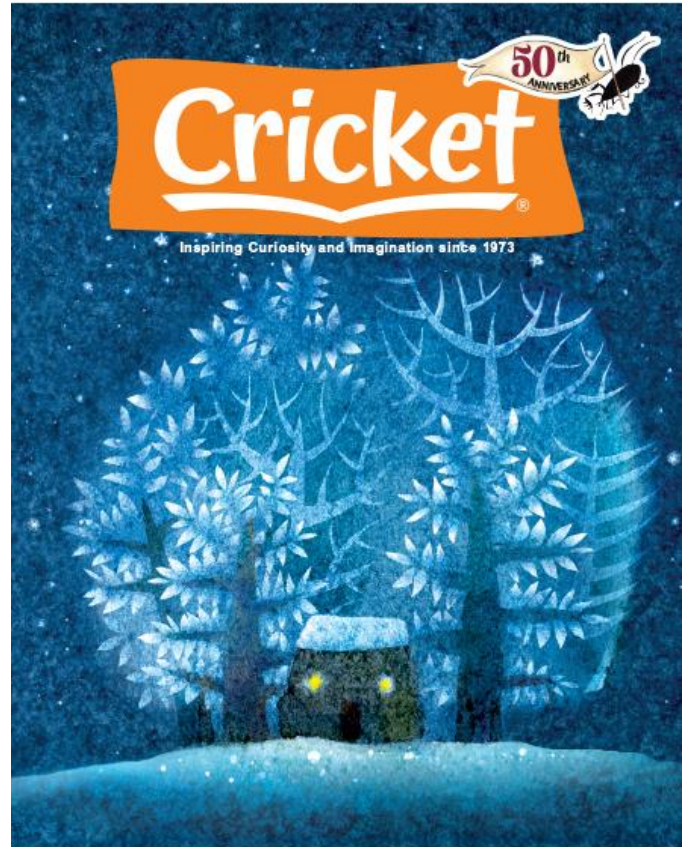
Winter is a time for celebrations and holiday traditions for people around the world. Explore with students how different authors include holiday traditions in their writing. Use the mini lessons in this teacher guide to help reinforce language arts skills and engage students in a variety of learning activities.

CONVERSATION QUESTION

Why do traditions matter?

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze short stories.
- Students will analyze an author's style.
- Students will analyze how events unfold in a story.
- Students will use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- Students will write informative/explanatory texts.
- Students will analyze cultural characteristics of different places.
- Students will explain cultural influences.



In addition to supplemental materials focused on core English Language Arts skills, this flexible teaching tool offers vocabulary-building activities, questions for discussion, and cross-curricular activities.

SELECTIONS

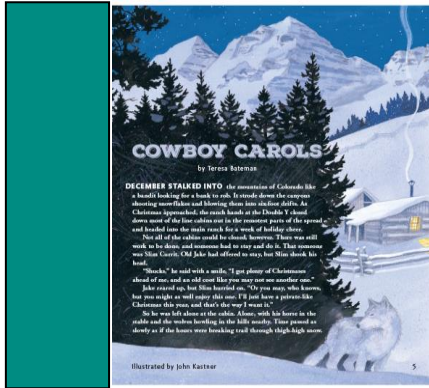
- **Cowboy Carols**
Western Fiction
- **The Turkey We Saved from Thanksgiving**
Humorous Fiction
- **Diwali**
Poem

Cricket® Teacher Guide: November/December 2023

Cowboy Carols

pp. 5–10, Western Fiction

Use this story about a cowboy's first Christmas away from home to teach students to analyze an author's style.



RESOURCES

- Author's Style

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will analyze an author's style.
- Students will write informative/explanatory texts.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **stalked** (p. 5) followed something by moving quietly and slowly
- **aplenty** (p. 6) in a large number or amount
- **reckon** (p. 6) to think or suppose
- **wielded** (p. 8) held a tool in your hands so that you are ready to use it
- **twinge** (p. 9) a sudden slight feeling or emotion

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why do traditions matter?

Work with students to brainstorm a list of family traditions, such as game night, pizza night, baking a special cake for a birthday, visiting grandparents over the summer, hiding baby teeth under a pillow, playing music together, etc. Discuss how these traditions make people feel and why these traditions are important. Then tell students to note the family traditions mentioned by the main character in this story.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Review the vocabulary words and definitions. Then ask two volunteers to choose one of the words without revealing it to the class. Give them three or four minutes to come up with a skit that shows the meaning of the word using only gestures and facial expressions—no words. Have partners perform their skit for the class. Ask classmates to silently guess the word. Then confirm the correct answer. Repeat this activity with the remaining vocabulary words.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. Why does Slim decide not to celebrate Christmas?
2. What makes him change his mind?
3. What family traditions does Slim remember when he is alone?
4. How does Slim decorate the cabin?
5. What does Slim mean when he says, "I reckon that if Christmas is planted in your heart when you're young, it blossoms every year in December, regardless"?
6. What theme(s) do his words suggest?

SKILL FOCUS: Analyze Author's Style

INSTRUCT: Point out that authors make many choices when they write. For example, they make choices about which words to use, how long or short to make their sentences, and what kinds of comparisons they want to make. All these choices work together to express the author's style. One author might use short sentences and lots of dialogue. Another might use long descriptive sentences and vibrant verbs. An author's style might be witty, flowery, formal, simple, or conversational. Distribute the *Author's Style* worksheet. Go over the information about each style choice. Have students work in small groups to answer the questions.

ASSESS: Have groups complete the activity at the bottom of the worksheet. Then work with the class to come up with a word or phrases that describe the author's style.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Have students write a personal essay about a cultural tradition they enjoy taking part in. The tradition could be related to anything—food, music, religion, dance, crafts, etc. Have students describe the activity, its history, and how they take part in it.

Author’s Style Teresa Bateman, the author of “Cowboy Carols,” has been writing stories since she was in elementary school. “Writing is so much a part of me that I cannot imagine my life without it. Most important, however, writing is fun for me. It’s often hard work, but it’s still a lot of fun.”

Use the information and activities below to analyze Teresa Bateman’s style.

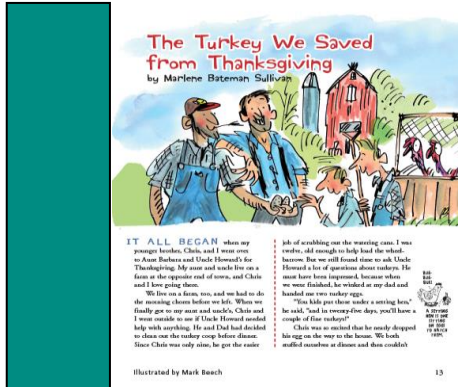
Teresa Bateman’s Style Choices	Example Passages
<p>Dialect: Sometimes people in one region use words and expressions that people from other regions usually don’t use. A dialect is a variety of language that is spoken in a particular region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find examples of dialect in the example passage. • Why do you think the author used dialect in her story? 	<p>“‘Shucks,’ he said with a smile, ‘I got plenty of Christmases ahead of me, and an old coot like you may not see another one.’”</p>
<p>Long Sentences: Teresa Bateman uses many long sentences in her story. Pause after reading each sentence in the passage and discuss what happens in it. Then read the passage without pausing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the effect of the long sentences in the example passage? • Would shorter sentences have the same effect? Explain. 	<p>“Slim whacked together a stand from a few pieces of firewood and stood the tree up in a corner of his small log cabin. It looked kind of bare and scrawny standing there, but it changed the whole appearance of the room. The sight and the smell of it brought Christmas rushing in on him, as if he’d been holding the door closed against a strong wind that had finally blown it open wide.”</p>
<p>Unusual Comparisons: Teresa Bateman uses surprising similes and metaphors in her story. These comparisons create unusual images that help readers visualize story details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What two things are compared in the simile from the example passage? • What do you visualize when you read this comparison? • What does the comparison tell you about December in the Colorado mountains? 	<p>“December stalked into the mountains of Colorado like a bandit looking for a bank to rob.”</p>

Find Examples Look back through “Cowboy Carols” and find other examples of these three elements of Teresa Bateman’s style.

The Turkey We Saved from Thanksgiving

pp. 13–16, Humorous Fiction

To review climax and resolution, use this story about two brothers who save the life of a Thanksgiving turkey.



RESOURCES

- Climax and Resolution

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a short story.
- Students will analyze how events unfold in a story.
- Students will analyze cultural characteristics of different places.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **impressed (p. 13)** felt and showed admiration or interest
- **bewildered (p. 14)** confused
- **gorging (p. 14)** eating large amounts of food
- **pucker (p. 15)** to gather something, such as your face, into wrinkles or small folds

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why do traditions matter?

Have students share their favorite Thanksgiving traditions. Then ask them to share times when they and their families have had to break with their Thanksgiving traditions and celebrate in different ways—maybe they went to a restaurant instead of eating at home or went to a different relative’s house. Explain that the next story tells about two brothers who break a Thanksgiving tradition.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary words and definitions. Then divide the class into small groups. Give each group four index cards. Have members write one vocabulary word on each card and place the cards face down in a pile. Have group members take turns randomly choosing a card and then using gestures and facial expressions to show the meaning of the word. Other group members should try to guess the word. After all groups have finished, remind students to look for the words as they read.

READ & DISCUSS

After students read the story, use these questions to prompt discussion:

1. Why did the boys’ mother tell them not to get attached to Timothy?
2. How did the boys save Timothy from being eaten?
3. Why did Timothy leave the cave?
4. What happened when Timothy came back?
5. How did Timothy become part of the family’s Thanksgiving tradition?

SKILL FOCUS: Climax and Resolution

INSTRUCT: Remind students that climax and resolution are two important stages in the plot of a story. The action in a story builds to the climax or most exciting moment of a story. The climax is also a turning point when a character makes a decision or takes an action that makes the outcome of the conflict clear. The resolution stage of a story comes after the climax. During the resolution, the conflict is resolved, and loose ends are tied up. Explain that identifying the conflict in a story and listing key events can help students recognize the climax and resolution stages. Have students work in groups to identify the conflict in “The Turkey We Saved from Thanksgiving.” Discuss ideas as a class.

ASSESS: Distribute the *Climax and Resolution* worksheet. Have students work in pairs to complete it. Review the worksheet with the class.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Point out that many countries around the world have their own festivals dedicated to giving thanks. These countries include Canada, Germany, Japan, Liberia, Grenada, and the Netherlands. Assign a different country to groups of students and have them research and report on Thanksgiving customs there.

Climax and Resolution In the table below, identify the conflict in “The Turkey We Saved from Thanksgiving.” Then reread the story and note key events. Finally, identify the climax and resolution.

Conflict:

Key Events:

1.

2.

3.

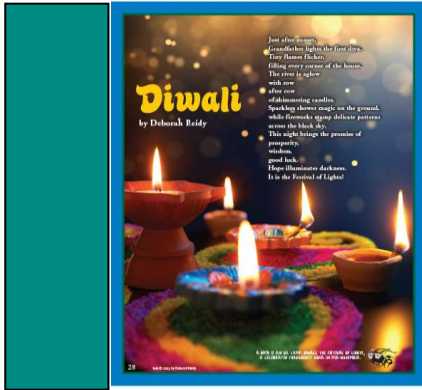
Climax:

Resolution:

Diwali

p. 28, Poem

Have students write their own holiday poems using this poem about Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, as a model.



RESOURCES

- Write a Poem with Imagery

OBJECTIVES

- Students will read and analyze a poem.
- Students will use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- Students will explain cultural influences.

KEY VOCABULARY

- **stamp** (p. 28) to make a mark on something
- **prosperity** (p. 28) the state of being successful, usually by making a lot of money
- **illuminate** (p. 28) to shine light on something

ENGAGE

Conversation Question: Why do traditions matter?

Discuss forms of light that are an important part of different traditional celebrations: lights on a Christmas tree, candles lit for Hanukkah, candles on a birthday cake, fireworks on the Fourth of July, etc. Explain that the poem students are about to read describes how one person celebrates Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. Play a video for students that builds background on Diwali.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Display and read aloud the vocabulary words and definitions. Have students write sentences that use the words correctly and then exchange sentences with a partner to check each other's work. Remind students to look for the vocabulary words as they read the poem.

READ & DISCUSS

Have students listen closely as you read the poem aloud. Then have students take turns reading the poem to a partner. Use the following questions to discuss the poem:

1. What words or images stood out to you in the poem?
2. What is this poem about?
3. What is your impression of the speaker in this poem?
4. If you were going to break up this poem into stanzas, where would each stanza begin and end?
5. What overall feeling do you get from this poem? Is it a joyful poem, a strong and serious poem, or something else? Explain.

SKILL FOCUS: Write a Poem with Imagery

INSTRUCT: Explain that poets use words to paint pictures in readers' minds. They use details to tell how something looks, sounds, feels, smells, or tastes. A writer's use of words and phrases that appeal to the senses is called imagery. Read aloud the first four lines of the poem as students listen with eyes closed. Have students turn and talk with a partner to describe the images that came to mind as they listened. Ask volunteers to identify the sense that the imagery in these lines appeals to (sight). Repeat this sequence with lines 5–8. Then have partners use the sequence with lines 9–11 and 12–17. Have partners discuss which sections of the poem contained the most powerful imagery. As a class, discuss other kinds of information about Diwali contained in the poem.

ASSESS: Have students choose a favorite holiday tradition to write about, such as making Christmas cookies, lighting a special candle, exchanging gifts, or visiting distant relatives. Distribute the *Write a Poem with Imagery* worksheet and go over the writing process.

EXTEND

Social Studies: Have students create infographic-style posters or slides about Diwali. Show examples of infographics from the internet. Students' infographics should include words and pictures that explain what Diwali is, where it is celebrated, traditions, and interesting facts.

Write a Poem with Imagery In the table below, identify the tradition you will write about and jot down details about it that you want to include in your poem.

Tradition I will write about:
Details I want to include:

Sensory Details Brainstorm words and details related to your tradition for all five senses and record them below. You might not use every sense, but see how many details you can come up with.

Sight	
Sound	
Touch	
Taste	
Smell	

Draft/Revise/Finalize Write a rough first draft of your poem—just get your ideas down on paper. Decide if you want to use rhyme, repetition, or stanza breaks. You can add these when you revise. After you revise your poem, ask a writing partner for constructive feedback and then make more revisions. Put your revised poem away for a few days. Then go back to it and create your final draft.