

Literary Analysis

Bibliographic Information: Scott, E. (2012). *Buried Alive!: The Story of the Chilean Miners*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Plot:

Tell a good story: The author collects information about the Chilean mine accident and tells a great story by making the events understandable for children. The author tells the plot in an inspiring way, despite the awful torture that each miner was put through. This keeps children interested in this story without getting upset about the tragedy because the author explains how the miners were able to stay positive.

Plausible and credible: This story is plausible and credible because the author took a great amount of time to collect this information and make sure it was accurate and precise. She includes acknowledgements at the beginning of the book, in which she thanks everyone who helped her research this event. This makes the author credible and the plot is plausible because it is simply the author retelling the true story of these miners.

Well-constructed plot: The plot is well-constructed and well organized by beginning with the initial shock of the miners, the teamwork these miners exemplified, and the final rescuing. The author constructed the plot to show readers the impact of teamwork, courage, and leadership (Elaine Scott).

Elaine Scott, Author. (n.d.). Retrieved October 22, 2014, from <http://www.elainescott.com/>

Setting:

Where does the story take place: The story takes place in the Chilean desert in the San Jose mine when the miners were trapped 2,300 feet underground. This collapse occurred in August, which caused the underground environment to be even more difficult to endure.

Setting affects characters: The Atacama Desert, which is where the story takes place, is considered the driest place in the world (Johnson, 2013). This setting affects the characters because it makes the underground environment even more uncomfortable. This also means that the miners had to work together in order to survive this unbelievably long process.

Johnson, T. (2013, January 1). "The World's Most Extreme Places: Atacama Desert" - weather.com. Retrieved October 26, 2014, from <http://www.weather.com/news/science/nature/worlds-most-extreme-places-atacama-desert-20130606>

Theme:

Embedded themes: The main theme in this story is teamwork. The miners all worked together to survive in this collapsed mine and this interaction helped them stay sane and healthy. The author describes the event from Luis Urzua's words in this section when he says; "The men might be down there for a long

time. They might possibly die there. They needed to cooperate” (Scott, 2012, p. 20). This explains that the men needed to cooperate and work together if they wanted to survive.

Worth imparting to children: This theme of teamwork is worth imparting to children because teamwork is important in many situations in life. People need to be able to work in teams in school, work, and almost every kind of relationship. Children can see that if the miners can survive this tragedy due to their teamwork, then teamwork can help us through almost anything.

Characterization:

Reveals characters: The author reveals characters through narration and dialogue. The author explains many different miners in each chapter and their thoughts during this time. She includes quotes from these interviews about how the miners were feeling and how they managed to survive.

Diverse groups of people: This book presents a diverse group of people because Chilean miners are rarely mentioned in any children’s books. The author presents diverse groups of people in each chapter as she interviews many miners; the main focus Mario Gomez, the supervisor Don Lucho, and many more miners were interviewed and quoted.

Style:

Appropriate to the subject: The author uses a writing style that is appropriate to the subject. Scott uses this nonfiction piece and tells it in an interesting and motivating way for younger readers. She says, “A strong leader must also be capable of facing problems head-on and creating viable plans to solve them” (Scott, 2012, p. 16). These details help readers understand the deeper qualities of the miners instead of just stating facts about them.

Straightforward language: The author uses straightforward language to describe the events of the collapse. The author says, “It happened at 2:00 p.m. local time. There has been weeping within the mine for weeks” (Scott, 2012, p. 16). This language is direct and easy for young readers to understand.

Point of View:

Primary point of view: The story is told from many of the miners’ points of view. They retell the story from their perspective such as when Mario Gomez says, “That was the most terrible day. In the middle of the cave-in, I thought we’d never get out of there again” (Scott, 2012, p. 17). These different points of view help us see the experience from all of their eyes. This point of view is appropriate because it helps the readers to understand what each miner was going through at this time.

Author’s choice: I think the author chose this point of view because she didn’t want to simply retell the story when the miners all have a firsthand experience and can tell the story in different ways. This allows the readers to hear exactly what the miners were thinking and feeling during this long process.

Describe Characteristics of this text specific to the genre:

Significant facts included: The author includes all of the significant facts in order for students to understand this story, even if they have never heard of this event. The author says, “Chile is the world’s leading producer of copper, and copper is its chief export. In order to be useful to the world, the copper has to be extracted from the earth, or mined” (Scott, 2012, p. 10). These facts are important for readers to introduce the story and understand the need for miners.

Appropriate for intended audience: I think the text is appropriate for fifth or sixth graders, but it is a very difficult text to read with words that may be hard to understand. The author uses phrases such as, “Located near the small city of Copiapo, in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile, the San Jose is a medium-size slope mine that has produced copper, and some gold, for the past 120 years” (Scott, 2012, p. 13). These terms may be tricky for students that have not looked at a map of South America so they do not have that schema to understand this. However, the author does include maps and explanations of many of the difficult phrases, so students are able to use these resources.

Illustrations extend the text: Every illustration in this book has a caption and extends the text. The illustrations are actual pictures from the mine when the miners were trapped down there, and they have smiles on their faces. One picture shows five miners waving and giving a thumbs up with the caption saying, “The miners had survived for seventeen days with very little food and no contact with the outside world when a television camera captured this image on August 28, 2010” (Scott, 2012, p. 13). The illustrations and captions tell another story and give the readers a visual representation of what the miners endured.

Reflections: (*What are your impressions? Connections to past or future plans? Insights?, etc.*)

I learned a lot by reading *Buried Alive* and I think younger readers could benefit from this book in many ways. The pictures helped me to see how real this tragedy was and how the miners found a way to stay positive through it all. This is a devastating event, but the author makes this story easy to read by focusing on the positive aspects in order to appeal to younger readers.

This story would be suitable for fifth graders. There are many lessons that can be implemented with this book. Students can focus on the themes of teamwork and positivity in hard times. I could also use this as a read aloud and discuss the timeline of events that occurred in the 69 days that they were underground. This book is a great example of a nonfiction book that can be used in a variety of ways.