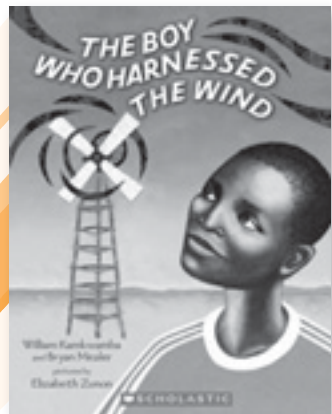


The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind



Summary

When drought and famine plague Malawi, an African boy dreams of building “electric wind” to generate power and pump water to the fields. People call the boy crazy, but he has a vision for change. Can he save the village from starvation?

Authors William Kamkwamba, the subject of this book, studies engineering at Dartmouth College. He helped found the Moving Windmills Project to support economic development and education in Malawi, Africa. Bryan Mealer coauthored the book with Kamkwamba.

Genre/Text Type Autobiography/Picture Book

Themes/Ideas showing courage in the face of hardship; coping with natural disaster; pursuing a dream; showing ingenuity; understanding that hard work pays off

Unit Focus How do people respond when disaster strikes?

Author’s Craft figurative language; imagery; illustrations support key themes; third-person point of view; inclusion of native language; afterward for additional information

Key Understandings

- The authors’ vivid descriptions help readers connect to Kamkwamba’s life and experiences growing up in Malawi.
- Figurative language creates comparisons that evoke the harshness of the setting and the people’s circumstances.
- Elizabeth Zunon’s collage artwork enhances the text, beautifully portraying the harsh landscape and conveying Kamkwamba’s vision for change.
- Imagery makes the book more engaging and helps readers visualize the people, setting, and events.

Suggested Stopping Points to Invite Thinking

As you read aloud, you may wish to pause and ask students to turn and talk with partners or share comments with the group. Sample prompts are offered below.

Introduce the Text In Malawi, Africa, a boy and his village are starving to death because of a drought. Could the boy’s vision of a windmill really bring light and water to save his people? (The text begins on page 3.)

Stopping Point	Prompt	Possible Response
pp. 10–11 Thinking Within the Text	How does the authors’ use of descriptive details and dialogue help readers connect to Kamkwamba’s experiences and to his culture?	The text shows how the drought affects every family member and every aspect of William’s life. Food, a way to make a living, and even school are taken away from them. The inclusion of the native Malawi language allows a more in-depth insight.
p. 16 Thinking About and Beyond the Text	Cite the simile that is used to highlight the value of the scraps William finds. What is the narrator saying about the difference between how William views these items and how others view them?	“... pieces appeared like rusted treasures ...” To everyone else the pieces are useless junk, but to William they are valuable because they will help him build his windmill and bring light and water to his people.
pp. 24–25 Thinking Within and Beyond the Text	How does the narrator make the reader see the importance of the small light?	He compares the small bulb to the sun. The lightbulb has the power to bring life and hope back to the village and undo some of the harm caused by the drought.
pp. 28–29 Thinking About and Beyond the Text	How do the illustrations expand upon the text? What important changes are depicted through the illustrations on these pages?	The illustrations reveal how dramatically the windmills have changed the landscape, the people’s lives, and their hopes for the future. We now see sturdy, well-built windmills that provide power so people have food, water, and light.

Summarize After experiencing the drought, William has a vision of how the land and the lives of his people could be different. How does William persevere in the face of adversity and find a solution to their problem?