



Lucky's Mountain
Dianne Maycock

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Consider the following question as you read *Lucky's Mountain*:
How does Lucky live up to his name?

Story

“The stick rose, and then it smacked down hard on Lucky’s back. Maggie watched in horror as Lucky toppled over the edge of the cliff.”

Maggie Sullivan’s world has fallen apart. Forced to leave the close-knit mining community perched atop a mountain in British Columbia, she must also abandon Lucky, the three-legged dog that was a special gift from Pa. As she tries desperately to find a home for a mutt that nobody wants, Maggie finds herself confronting an angry mine owner, a bullying classmate and a savage-looking tramp who might be a murderer. It will take all her courage to find the right solution for Lucky and for herself.

Author

Dianne Maycock has always wanted to write books about animals and is thrilled that her first children’s book features a very special dog. Dianne currently shares her Victoria, British Columbia, home with two cats, Tiger and Ferdy, who love to steal her favorite writing chair and “read” the computer screen while she’s working. *Lucky’s Mountain* is based, in part, on Dianne’s mother’s stories of growing up in a mining town in B.C. As part of the research for *Lucky’s Mountain*, Dianne spent a lot of time “interviewing” her mother, an activity that both of them enjoyed very much.

Curricular Connections

Language Arts

- At the beginning of *Lucky’s Mountain*, Maggie’s mother receives a letter that will change Maggie’s life. Have students write three journal entries as either Maggie or her mother, setting out how the changes will affect them and how they feel about it.
- Ask students to visualize the following phrase from Chapter 3: “And now loyalty had just winged away on the mountain breeze” (p. 11). Have them write or draw all the things that came to mind. Share the results in small groups to locate similarities and differences. This activity can be done with other phrases from *Lucky’s Mountain* as well.
- “Looks can be deceiving,” “Things are not always as they seem” and “A picture is worth a thousand words” are sayings that refer to our perceptions of what we see. Have students explain what each statements means and find an example from the story to support it. For example: Willy Jenkins has the reputation of being crazy because of the way he looks; Maggie thinks Jock is trying to harm Lucky when he has his rope tied around his neck.



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- Maggie has to make choices and decisions that will affect her future. Have students write alternative settings where she makes the opposite choices. For example: not giving the gold nugget to Willy, not going to the river alone or not going to see Mr. Winters.
- On page 64, instead of eating a hunk of cheese, Lucky “wolfs” it down. (1) Why do you think “wolfs” is a good word to describe what Lucky is doing? (2) Can you find some other examples of interesting verbs? (3) Write a story about an adventure you have had, using as many interesting verbs as possible.
- At the end of the book, Louie asked Maggie to write him a letter about Patches' adventures in Vancouver. Imagine that you are Maggie writing the letter that Louie will read to Lucky and Sadie.
- Have students write a different ending to the story using one of the following suggestions or one of their own endings. (1) Mama and Elly get jobs and are allowed to stay on the mountain. (2) Maggie finds a way to take Lucky to the city with her. (3) Maggie finds someone other than Louie to take care of Lucky.

Art

- Using every possible clue from the book, draw a detailed map of the mountain-top village.
- Draw large full-length portraits of the characters in *Lucky's Mountain*.
- Dogs like Snoopy, Ace and Odie can be found in comic strips or books. Gather and share these and other comics and books that feature dogs. Design a comic strip using Lucky as the main character with events from *Lucky's Mountain* as the content.
- After reading *Lucky's Mountain*, draw a new cover selecting the images you felt to be the most powerful from the story. Write a paragraph explaining your choice.
- Divide *Lucky's Mountain* into six to eight sections and have groups of students tell the story through illustrations. Display them in the order that they occur. Have each group explain their choices of illustrations.
- Maggie is given one of Sadie's kittens and calls him Patches. Draw a portrait of Patches or choose one of Willy's pigs or a pit pony instead.
- On page 4, Maggie describes her Aunt Hortense as “Auntie Horseface.” Draw Aunt Hortense based on your image of Maggie's words.
- In *Lucky's Mountain*, Pa and Maggie collect beautiful eagle feathers. Use objects from nature such as feathers, pinecones, small pebbles and dried leaves to create a collage that would represent the town.



History

- During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many people lost all that they had. In *Reading is Seeing*, Jeffrey Wilhelm poses the following question: “What happens when structures in one’s life break down?” (p. 140). Share this question with students and have them discuss it in the context of *Lucky’s Mountain*.
- How do towns, cities, streets, mountains and other geographic features get their names? Find out how the following places in *Lucky’s Mountain* got their names: Pig Valley, Lucky’s Mountain, Number Five Mine, Seal Rock and Logan’s Trail. Find out how some places in your area got their names.
- *Lucky’s Mountain* is loosely based on the coal mining community of Blakeburn, which was located near Princeton, British Columbia. On August 13, 1930, a day known as Black Wednesday, there was a deadly mine explosion. Research Black Wednesday and write a report about it.
- The town upon which this story is based only existed from the 1920s until the 1940s, when the coal ran out and they closed the mine. It is now a ghost town. Research some British Columbia ghost towns and write a report about what you discover.
- How much would Maggie’s gold nugget have been worth in the 1930s? How much would it be worth now?

Drama

- Maggie is faced with the dilemma of having to leave behind something she loves. Brainstorm some other situations where this might happen. Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them act out possible solutions to such dilemmas.
- Jock bullies Maggie and Lucky. Have students create short skits that illustrate a bullying situation with both a positive and negative outcome.
- Maggie finds a gold nugget in the river (p. 78) and immediately thinks about how it will change her current situation. In small groups, have students act out possible ways in which her life might change.
- Maggie has an old trunk that contains items that remind her of her father. Divide the class into three or four groups. Using something like a cardboard box or a plastic container, have them put items into it that are connected in some way to *Lucky’s Mountain*. Have each group display their items and talk about them briefly, and have the others guess the part of the story they represent.



Science

- Many things we use in our world come from under the ground. Examples: gold, diamonds, oil, coal, salt, zinc and jade. Divide the class into small groups to research the techniques used for mining these and other minerals.
- Mining is done either on the surface or underground. In *Lucky's Mountain*, Maggie's father is killed in an underground mining accident. The common types of underground mining are slope and shaft. Find out more about each mining type along with the risks and benefits associated with each.
- Research and discuss the phrase "a canary in a coal mine."
- Many unexpected products are made from coal including baking powder, paint thinner and soda water! Make a list of some other products we use today that are made from coal.
- The kitten Maggie chose and named Patches had to be a girl rather than a boy. Can you find out why?

Suggested Resources

Fiction

- Barkhouse, Joyce. *Pit Pony*
 Bauer, Marion Dane. *Runt*
 Beveridge, Cathy. *Chaos in Halifax; Shadows of Disaster*
 Booth, David. *The Dust Bowl*
 Bunting, Eve. *A Train to Somewhere*
 DiCamillo, Kate. *Because of Winn Dixie*
 Galloway, Priscilla. *The Trail to Golden Cariboo*
 Harlow, Joan Hiatt. *Star in the Storm*
 Harris, Dorothy. *Ellen: Hobo Jungle*
 Horne, Constance. *The Tenth Pupil*
 Horne, Constance. *Trapped by Coal*
 Lawson, Julie. *Emily; Summer of Gold*
 Lee, Chinlun. *Good Dog, Paw!*
 Lied, Kate. *Potato: A Tale from the Great Depression*
 Nickle, Jon. *The Ant Bully*
 Pendziwol, Jean and Gourbault, Martine. *The Tale of Sir Dragon*
 Reynolds, Marilyn. *Good-bye to Griffiths Street*
 Shouse, Nancy. *Any Pet Will Do*
 Stewart, Sarah. *The Gardener*
 Thomas, Jane Resh. *The Comeback Dog*
 Wallace, Ian. *Boy of the Deeps*
 Walsh, Ann. *Moses, Me and Murder*
 Wayne, Susanne Santoro. *Petropolis*



Non-Fiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification numbers appear in parentheses where applicable)

- Bachusky, Johnnie. *Ghosttown Stories III: Tales of Dreams, Tragedies and Heroism in British Columbia* (971.2)
- Clark, John. *Mining to Minerals*. (333.8)
- Darling, Kathy. *ABC Dogs*. (636.7)
- Drake, Jane. *Mining*. (622)
- Fleming, R.B. *General Stores of Canada* (971)
- Gallagher, Kelly. *Deeper Reading*. (372.47)
- Gear, Adrienne. *Reading Power*. (372.47)
- Francis, Daniel. *Far West, The Story of British Columbia* (971.1)
- Freedman, Russell. *Children of the Great Depression*. (305.2)
- Harvey, Stephanie and Goudvis, Anne. *Strategies that Work*. (372.47)
- Hausman, Gerald. *Dogs of Myth: Tales From Around the World*. (398.2)
- Hinde, John R. *When Coal Was King: Ladysmith and the Coal Mining Industry on Vancouver Island* (333)
- Kalman, Bobbi. *The Life of a Miner*. (622)
- Langston, Laura. *Pay Dirt! The Search for Gold in British Columbia* (971.1)
- Matthews, Sheelagh. *Mining*. (338.2)
- Nelson, Sheila. *Crisis at Home and Abroad: The Great Depression, World War II, and Beyond (How Canada Became Canada)* (971.06)
- Place, Marian T. *Cariboo Gold, The Story of the British Columbia Gold Rush* (971.11)
- Taylor, G.W. *Mining: The History of Mining in British Columbia* (338.2)
- Varney, Philip. *Ghost Towns of the Pacific Northwest: Your Guide to Ghost Towns, Mining Camps and Historic Forts of Washington, Oregon and British Columbia* (917.95)
- Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. *Reading is Seeing*. (372.4)



Online

Coal Kit

http://www.coal.ca/content/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=7&Itemid=27 Free kit from the Coal Association of Canada

Common Ground

<http://www.cat.com/cda/layout?m=78220&x=7> A free CD ROM containing teaching materials for Grades K-12, focusing on mining.

Historical Gold Prices – 1833 – Present http://www.nma.org/pdf/gold/his_gold_prices.pdf

Then and Now: Prices *Compare Prices During the Great Depression to Prices Today*
http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-15481_19268_20778-52530--,00.html.

What On Earth?

<http://www.earth.uwaterloo.ca/services/whaton/>

Index of Famous Dogs

<http://www.citizenlunchbox.com/famous/dogs-A-D.html>

Good Character

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/>

Character Counts

<http://www.charactercounts.org>

B.C. Museum of Mining

<http://www.bcmuseumofmining.org/history.html>

Types of Mining

<http://www.detroit salt.com/mining-types.htm>

Mining Techniques

<http://www.crowsnest.bc.ca/coal06.html>

Great Depression of Canada

<http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/projects/canadianhistory/depression/depression.html>

The Mill at Britannia Mine

<http://www.theconcentrator.ca/>

Coal: a Fossil fuel

<http://eia.doe.gov/kids/energyfacts/sources/non-renewable/coal.html>

Mineral Resources Education Program

http://www.bcminerals.ca/files/teacher_resources.php

History of Mining in B.C.

<http://www.empr.gov.bc.ca/subwebs/mining/History/default.htm>



Dear Reader,

Although both my parents were young children during the Great Depression of the 1930s, they lived very different lives. My dad grew up on a farm in an area of Saskatchewan that was hit hard by the Depression. Dad had plenty to eat since his family grew their own food, but they had very little money. Like all the other families in the area, they had no radio, no television, no newspapers and no electric lights. What they did have were horses (for riding to school), sloughs to swim in during the hot summer months, and home-made skating rinks (although they couldn't afford any skates). To play hockey, Dad and his brothers wore ordinary leather shoes, made sticks from old pieces of wood and used frozen clumps of ice for pucks. Even though his family was very poor, my dad remembers his childhood as a time of incredible happiness.

My mom, on the other hand, grew up in a company mining town very much like the community described in *Lucky's Mountain*. Her dad was a mining engineer. As Pa says in *Lucky's Mountain*, children in most of the company towns were "lucky." The company provided everyone with plenty of good food, a wide variety of sports activities, and special events like the enormous town Christmas tree with a present underneath it for each child. Even though my mother heard about the Great Depression, it didn't really affect her at all, and she felt that she had a very privileged childhood.

One activity Mom remembers fondly is attending the Saturday night dances with her whole family; babies would be laid to sleep all around the room while everyone else ate and danced. She also remembers visiting the mine horses in the town barn and feeding them carrots and apples. Since my mom had four brothers, she grew up as a real tomboy, playing hockey at the town rink (with skates and proper hockey sticks). She also played baseball and tennis in the summer on fields provided by the company. One of her fondest memories is of clustering around the radio on Friday nights with her brothers to listen to the hockey games.

During the winters the town was often cut off completely from the rest of the world. Groups of children would shoot down the mountain on giant sleds provided by the company. Then they would load the sleds onto the little tram that hauled supplies up the mountain, climb back up the hill and zoom down all over again.

My mom loved her life in the close-knit mining community and she was very, very sad when the mine closed and everyone had to move away.

Even though I also had a happy childhood growing up in a big city with cars, televisions and electric lights, I sometimes think that I could have had just as much (or even more) fun growing up in a small town during the Great Depression. What about you?

Happy reading,

Dianne