

FRANZ'S PHANTASMAGORICAL MACHINE — TEACHING GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

A self-taught inventor never stops following the call to imagine, discover, create.

From the time he is a small boy, Franz is curious about machines and how they work. He wants to try to build his own. Even though he's needed to work on the family farm, and later marries and has a family of his own, Franz never gives up. He learns and tries and tests his ideas on his own. And though many don't understand or appreciate it, when Franz completes his magnificent, elaborate World Machine, he finally finds an audience that recognizes his genius.

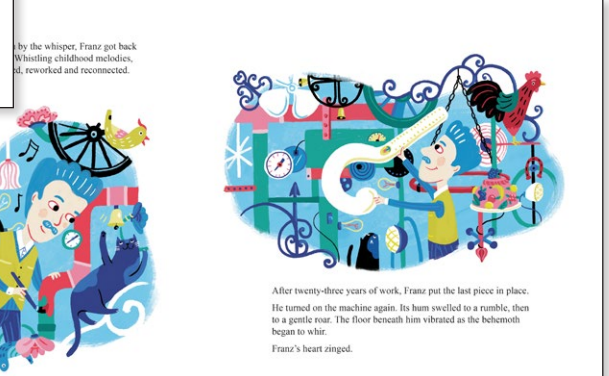
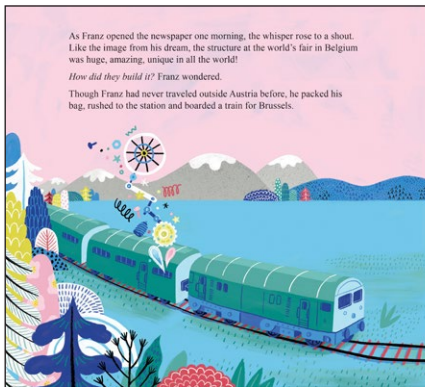
Franz is sure to inspire every child who longs to create something amazing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BETH ANDERSON is a former basement tinkerer and educator. She's the author of *An Inconvenient Alphabet*, *Lizzie Demands a Seat!* and several other books for children. When she's not writing, she might be weaving, gardening, exploring nature or playing with her grandkids. Born and raised in Illinois, she now lives near the mountains in Colorado. To learn more, visit bethandersonwriter.com.



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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

CAROLINE HAMEL worked in graphic design and advertising before creating a travel diary that sparked a love for illustration. She has illustrated several books for French-language publishers and now works full-time as an illustrator and designer from her home in Montreal, Quebec. To learn more, visit carolinehamel.com.



Teaching guide © Beth Anderson
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

NOTE: Questions and activities cover a range of ages and abilities and involve reading, writing, language and speaking & listening standards. Please use them as appropriate for your learners.

Pre-reading

- Look at the cover and read the title of the book.
 - What interesting details do you notice?
 - What do you think “*phantasmagorical*” means?
 - How would you describe what a machine is? What are some examples?
 - What do you think the story is about? Make some predictions.
- What questions do you have?
- Preview and discuss any vocabulary words that might be new to students.

Post-reading

- Return to your predictions. Were you correct?
- Have your questions been answered by the story?
- What would you like to know more about?



KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

1. What do you think the “*tiny whisper*” is? Do you think everyone has a “*whisper*” of some kind? What about you?
2. Why do you think other people lost patience with Franz?
3. How did Franz balance his responsibilities with his desire to build the machine? How do you balance your responsibilities with other activities you want to do for fun?
4. What kind of person was Franz? What are a few of his character traits? How do you know? Share examples from the text. Do you think Franz showed courage? Why or why not? Do you know anyone like Franz? Would you enjoy spending time with him in his workshop? Why or why not?
5. Is Franz the only curious one in the story? How do you know? What are you curious about?
6. What challenges did Franz face? Which do you think was the most difficult? Why?
7. What is the most important idea or theme you found in the story? Support your choice with examples.
8. What surprised you most about the story?



CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Words and Pictures

- How do words and illustrations work together to help you understand Franz as a character? Examine the scenes and choose some examples. Which scene is your favorite? Why?



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Meanings of Words and Phrases

1. What do you think it means when the author says
"But his father had no time for Franz's ambitions. 'Enough dillydallying.'?"
2. What do you think it means when the author says
"Franz had transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary."?
3. When Franz turned on the machine after he'd fixed the problems, his "heart zinged."
What do you think that means?
What makes your heart "zing"?

Author's Word Choice

In this story, the author uses several types of figurative language that play with sound.

1. **Alliteration** is the repetition of initial sounds. Look at the title. What initial sounds are repeated? (The title is a good example of how alliteration is about the first sound, not necessarily the first letter.)

Franz's Phantasmagorical Machine

This sentence has three examples of alliteration:

"Day after day, Franz pondered and paced, sketched and scrumpled, fussed and fretted."

Find more examples in the story. How does alliteration affect the story when you read it aloud?

Practice: With a partner, write a sentence using alliteration that expresses a main idea or theme of the story.

2. **Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that imitate sounds, or sound words. You can find onomatopoeia in the illustrations and also as sound words in sentences.

Look at these two examples:

"**RATTLE CLATTER CLANG!**"

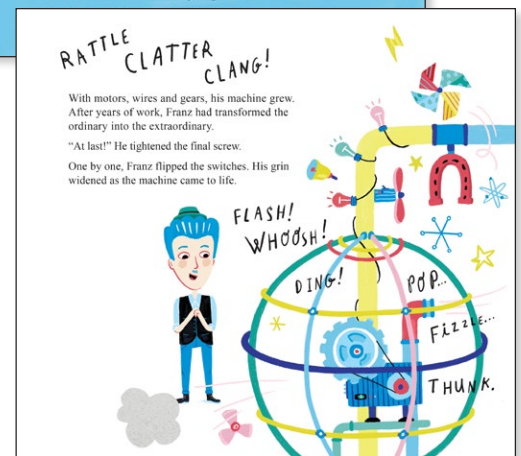
"... the *flutter* of pages, the *click* of the abacus and the *scratch* of the chalk."

Try saying the words aloud. Can you think of anything else these words sound like or remind you of?

Can you find more examples of onomatopoeia in the story?

Why do you think the author used so many sound words in the story?

Practice: Use onomatopoeia in your own writing.



WORD WORK AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Action verbs!

Franz's story has lots of action! Here are some opportunities to work with action verbs. English language learners especially benefit from a variety of activities to build vocabulary.

- **Identify action verbs:** Distribute the task of gathering action verbs from each spread to individuals or small groups. As students consider if words are verbs, it helps if they ask themselves — "Can you DO it?"
- **Build Vocabulary:** Use charades to act out the verbs and learn unfamiliar words.
- **Categories:** Make a T-chart and sort verbs into *machine actions* and *human actions*. You can also use other categories such as *positive* and *negative*.
- **Evaluate:** Use a group of verbs from a category, such as sound verbs like whisper, hum, rumble, roar, and plot them along a line to show intensity. (quietest to loudest, slowest to fastest, etc).

Using Strong Verbs in Writing

Use a basic sentence with a common verb such as GO or LOOK and replace it with options you've just worked with. Help students see the power of using just the right verb to bring writing to life. (ex: I went up the hill. > I pedaled up the hill.)

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Revising: Use a piece of student writing to focus on word choice with verbs. Model the process. Highlight verbs. Consider if the verbs can be replaced with stronger verbs that SHOW the reader what's happening. This is a great chance to use a thesaurus. Share the "before" and "after" versions. What effect did the revisions have?

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Art and Setting: Authors and illustrators do research when they create historical stories. What details do you notice in the art that help you understand the time and place?
Look around the space where you are. What objects from your world wouldn't be a part of Franz's life? How do you think today's world would affect Franz if he lived now?
- Connect to Self: Use a Venn diagram to compare yourself to Franz. How are you the same? How are you different? Do you think you'd be good friends if you could have met him?
- Back Matter:
 - How does the back matter information help you understand more about Franz and the machine?
 - What did you learn that surprised you?
 - What connections can you make to the story from your own life?

RESPOND TO READING

Write!

- Journal or personal narrative: Write about a time you tried to make something. What did you imagine? Where did you get your idea? What challenges did you face? How did others react? What happened? How did you feel about it?
- Write to persuade: Is Franz's machine valuable or worthless? Think of three supporting ideas for your opinion and write to persuade. Did you convince anyone to change their opinion? Did anyone convince you to think differently?

Create!

- Art project: Trash to Treasure
Collect cast-off items, ordinary objects, and "throwaways." Turn your trash into treasure by creating something extraordinary such as a collage, a mobile, or whatever your imagination whispers to you as you ponder your creation. Will you make a plan? Or make it up as you go? Think creatively about how to use items in new ways.

Here are some ideas for ordinary materials you might use:

egg cartons	used gift wrap	magazine pages
plastic lids	twist ties	yarn
paper wrappers	newspaper	paper scraps
rubber bands	used envelopes	string
caps from bottles & containers		
empty bottles & containers (make sure all objects are clean)		
cardboard tubes (from toilet paper, wrapping paper, paper towels)		

Also: Many recycle and upcycle projects for kids are available online.

Have fun!

You can share photos of your creations with the author at beth@bethandersonwriter.com

There are a number of videos of the *Weltmaschine* online. Be sure to enjoy the machine in action and be amazed by all the objects Franz Gsellmann used!

